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Thank you very much for taking the time to share your experience and your concerns about the Government's proposed changes to our immigration and asylum system with me.

I believe the British people want to see an immigration system based on fairness - one where we are able to act compassionately towards those fleeing conflict or crisis, while ensuring we have overall control of our immigration system. No system in which people are forced to risk their lives crossing the channel on small boats in order to seek asylum in this country is functioning correctly, and it is clear that the system we inherited was neither controlled nor fair.

I understand that many people will have strong feelings about the proposals announced by the Home Secretary. I want to be clear that I believe that immigration has contributed a great deal to this country, and I am proud of the diversity it has brought with it. I also believe that the UK has a proud history of welcoming people fleeing persecution and conflict, and that this is a national duty we must always uphold.

I understand that the proposals concerning "earned settlement" are a source of anxiety for many. As you may be aware, the proposals are currently under consultation. Importantly, this consultation explicitly seeks views on transitional arrangements for those already in this country, and I would strongly encourage people affected by the proposals to share their views directly through the consultation.

I want to assure you that I believe that any changes to the immigration system must be introduced in a staggered way, respecting that many people have already come to this country on the basis of a clear settlement route, and that the rules should not change beneath their feet. I have raised this directly in a Westminster Hall debate.

I do welcome that, under the current proposals, the Government has outlined several ways in which the new qualification period can be reduced, for example that those working in public sector healthcare and teaching roles could still qualify after five years, and that volunteering in the community would allow indefinite leave to remain after five to seven years. It is very important that we recognise the large contributions many migrants make to our public services and society more broadly, and I am pleased that the Government has signalled that it is open to recognising meaningful contributions to this country beyond fiscal measurements such as income and tax contribution.

Thank you again for sharing your views and personal experience with me. Although I appreciate this is a complex and difficult issue, I hope that the above does set out my views on the proposed reforms, and what I am pushing for from the Government. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any other questions or would like to discuss this with me further.

Best wishes,

Peter Swallow MP

Member of Parliament for Bracknell, Crowthorne, Sandhurst and Whitegrove