Ministry
of Justice

[redacted]

[redacted]
Parole Board for England & Wales
10 South Colonnade
London
E14 4PU

MoJ ref: ADR83600

1 February 2021

Dear [redacted],

THE ROOT AND BRANCH REVIEW OF THE PAROLE SYSTEM: PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON MAKING SOME PAROLE HEARINGS OPEN TO VICTIMS OF CRIME AND THE WIDER PUBLIC

Thank you for your letter of 26 November providing the Parole Board's response to the public consultation on whether parole hearings should be open to the public in some limited circumstances. I am grateful that you took the time to prepare such a comprehensive response. The work you have undertaken to implement the recent reforms and your constructive reaction to the current review as it gets underway is greatly appreciated. I thank you once again for the way the Board has embraced all the review work we have done since 2018.

As we identified when we published the consultation, the proposed measures for opening some hearings to the public is not straightforward. Your acknowledgment of the challenges involved, and the suggestion of a staged approach are welcomed. I am committed to considering the options in light of all the responses we received prior to responding to the consultation, with further details being worked through as part of the review. I intend to issue the government's response to the consultation shortly which will set out our intended course of action. I know that my officials have already discussed the options with your [redacted] and others at the Parole Board. I am grateful for the excellent working relationship that they have.

I note your concern that opening up hearings has the potential to hamper a full exploration of cases and witness evidence by the Parole Board. I want to take this opportunity to reassure you that, whilst it is right we should look at ways to make the system more open and transparent, I am committed to ensuring the Parole Board's ability to perform its function and obtain the best possible evidence are not compromised which is so important for public protection.

Yours ever

[redacted]

[redacted]