

# Victims and Prisoners Bill

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AMENDMENT

TO BE MOVED

IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

*[Supplementary to the Marshalled List]*

**After Clause 54**

LORD JACKSON OF PETERBOROUGH

After Clause 54, insert the following new Clause –

**“Parole Board proceedings: enabling public scrutiny**

- (1) The Secretary of State has a statutory duty to improve the openness and transparency of the work of the Parole Board and to facilitate a greater public understanding of its statutory framework, procedures and proceedings.
- (2) The Secretary of State must exercise their powers under section 239(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, to require that Parole Board hearings should normally be open to the public unless there are exceptional circumstances for not doing so, as outlined in subsection (5).
- (3) The Secretary of State has the power to formally direct the Chair of the Parole Board to make arrangements for all Parole Board hearings to be heard in public, as set out in Parole Board (Amendment) Rules 2022 (SI 2022/717).
- (4) The Chair of the Parole Board may exercise their right to decline this request and direction from the Secretary of State and must outline their reasons for so doing in writing to the Secretary of State, within 28 days of a written direction being lodged with the Parole Board.
- (5) Such reasons in respect of subsection (4) must be evidence-based and include –
  - (a) where the Chair of the Parole Board believes that such a request and direction would, on the balance of probability and based on evidential information, indicate that the integrity of evidence presented to the Parole Board may be compromised and prevent a true and accurate assessment of the prisoner’s risk being provided by witnesses;
  - (b) that the presence of strong and valid objections from participants, including victims, their families or legal representatives, could jeopardise the cooperation of witnesses, should the hearing be in public; or
  - (c) that to hold a meeting in public might create an unacceptable risk of mental or physical harm to any of the participants.

- (6) The Secretary of State must formally consider any representations from the Chair of the Parole Board in a timely manner and if they choose to disregard the advice of the Chair of the Parole Board, they must outline their reasons within 28 days of receipt of such advice, taking into account all available evidence, including that provided by law enforcement, victims, their families or legal and other representatives.
- (7) The Secretary of State must, in exercising their powers, balance the need for openness, transparency and maintaining public faith in the efficacy of the criminal justice system with a commitment to the operational independence of the Parole Board and its members' deliberations, and with an obligation to reduce recidivism and support rehabilitation and the prisoner's ability to resettle in the community upon release from a custodial sentence.
- (8) This section applies only to offences as relevant to public protection decisions and outlined in Schedule 18B Parts 1 and 2 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003.
- (9) The Secretary of State must, within six months of the passing of this Act, and annually thereafter, publish an assessment of the efficacy of the policy of open Parole Board hearings and its impact upon openness, accountability, transparency and public support and whether it meets the interests of the justice test."

***Member's explanatory statement***

*This amendment seeks to consolidate the statutory instrument laid before Parliament on 30 June 2022 (SI 2022/717) to improve openness, accountability and transparency and public trust in the Parole Board by giving the Secretary of State powers to direct the Board to work to a presumption that such meetings should be routinely open to the public, with exceptions; whilst also safeguarding the Board's independence and the requirement to ensure rehabilitation and resettlement of those prisoners likely to be released from a custodial sentence.*



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*25 January 2024*

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PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS