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Women's State Pension Issues [WASPI]

I have considerable sympathy and support for the WASPI campaign. The issue is not about a desire to return the retirement age to what it was in the past, but about what is a reasonable amount of time that a person should be given to plan for their retirement.

I note that the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has recently found that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) failed to communicate "with enough urgency" the changes that have left many women waiting up to six years longer for their state pension. The PHSO concluded that the DWP "should have written to the women affected at least 28 months earlier than it did".

In addition, I am concerned that the accelerated timescale in the Pensions Act 2011 has produced considerable hardship and I believe that the Government needs to consider this.

More widely, I am aware of figures that show that there are 15,000 women over the age of 65 currently claiming Universal Credit (UC). I strongly believe the Government needs to act to end the five week wait for a first payment, to convert UC advances into grants instead of loans, to abolish the two-child limit in UC and Tax Credits, uprate legacy benefits and end the benefit cap. There also needs to be a change in the capital threshold which could help those not currently eligible for UC, as this can affect older people with savings.

I believe that everyone should have clear, transparent information about what their pension entitlement is and how they can successfully plan for their future and organise their own lives and finances.

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