

Ben Bradshaw MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA



Exeter City of Sanctuary
c/o CoLab
King William Street
Exeter
EX4 6PD

12.2.'18

Dear Ben

Re: Refugees (Family Reunion) (No. 2) Bill 2017-2019, Second Reading 16th March 18

We are writing to you Ben to again request your help and support as regards protecting and promoting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. **On the 16th March 2018** the new **Refugees Family Reunion (No.2) Bill** 2017-2019 will have its second reading in Parliament.

(<https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/refugeesfamilyreunionno2.html>.) We are hoping for your support on this very important Bill Ben and that you will be able to attend the debate and second reading on **16th March**.

As you know family reunion is really about keeping loved ones together and respecting the basic yearning we all have to be with our mum, dad, son or daughter. Unfortunately, restrictive government rules are leaving refugee family members separated, often in danger and isolated. The main Refugee organisations have worked with Angus MacNeil MP to introduce this Bill in order to change the restrictive rules surrounding family reunion here in the UK. The Refugee Council, Amnesty Int. UK, UNHCR UK, British Red Cross and Oxfam UK are supporting the Bill and urging MPs to attend this second reading.

Why is this Important?

We have attached a briefing paper on the Bill for MPs. It explains the important changes being sought in the Bill and why the changes are needed. We hope you find it helpful. The changes include:

- **Unaccompanied refugee children who are legally residing in the UK alone have no right under the current immigration rules to be reunited with even their closest family members.** All EU countries, with the exception of the UK and Denmark, uphold the rights of child refugees to be reunited with their closest family members in order to ensure their welfare and rebuild their lives. ***This Bill seeks to give unaccompanied refugee children in the United Kingdom the right to sponsor their family members to join them under family reunion rules.***
- **The only family members explicitly allowed to join *adult refugees* in the UK are their spouse/partner and their dependent children who are under the age of 18. *The Bill seeks to expand the criteria of who qualifies as a 'family member'.***
- **To re-introduce legal aid for refugee family reunion as in most cases this has been withdrawn.**

Family reunion should really be an important part of the UK's response to the refugee crisis and we do hope Ben that you can attend on the 16th March. By voting to reunite refugee families MPs can show true leadership and stop for e.g. unaccompanied child refugees here having to grow up alone, without their family in the UK.

With best Wishes - and looking forward to hearing from you

Signed: Clare Henry on behalf of Exeter City of Sanctuary campaigns group.