The Secretary
The Justice 2 Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Dear Sir

The Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill

I write to express my concern about this bill. Already there are areas of law and areas of the country where individuals cannot obtain proper legal representation. The inevitable result of the bill becoming law in its present form is that the supply of legal advice will sharply diminish and that is very much against the public interest.

While not a member of the legal profession, I know many who work in the legal profession and am aware that there are certain areas which are more prone to complaints. Large corporations will generally either simply sue for compensation or take their work elsewhere. Complaints tend to arise in stressful areas of the practice of the law and normally by individuals and I am concerned that those who practice in these areas will be penalised. I am also aware that there are certain areas of the country where it is already difficult to attract solicitors and I feel that if the bill became law that this would become even more difficult. As I understand it the funding of the new complaints commission will be based on the number of complaints (not necessarily those upheld or justified) and I am sure that there are certain areas of practice that are more likely to suffer complaints but not necessarily justified complaints. Surely this will lead either to an exodus of practitioners from these areas or alternatively an increase in the costs of providing such services. Neither eventuality is in the public interest. At the moment I understand that the complaints procedure is funded by the Law Society of Scotland based on the subscriptions of all members.

I trust that the Committee will have regard to my comments

Yours faithfully

Christine M Hodge