



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
SW1P 4DF

24 April 2019

Sajid

Visa Fees for Commonwealth Armed Forces Personnel

We write to seek your support to end visa fees for Commonwealth servicemen and women in our Armed Forces and applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR).

As you will know current legislation exempts Commonwealth personnel from immigration controls during the period of their service, and upon discharge they are eligible to apply for ILR, providing they have served for a minimum of four years.

However the application costs for a single person ILR have increased 119% in the past five years to £2,389. This means that a service leaver wishing to settle with a spouse and two children would face a bill of almost £10,000 to continue to live in the UK.

We believe that on the one hand this is a very high cost for servicemen and women, and on the other it doesn't reflect the respect in which all those prepared, if need be, to put their life on the line for our country, are held. The cost seems out of proportion to the actual costs to the taxpayer of the immigration work involved.

The result is that currently many service leavers are forced to rely on financial support from charities such as the Royal British Legion, who provided £36,000 in grants for visa fees last year alone, or else face either leaving the UK or separating their family unit.

In terms of numbers involved, our understanding is that as of 1 October 2018 there were 4,710 regular and reserve Commonwealth citizens in active service and approximately 400 Commonwealth service leavers apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain each year. These numbers are likely to rise in forthcoming years due to the announced intention of HM Armed Forces to increase its intake of Commonwealth personnel to recruit 1,250 per year.

So in business terms the current revenue raised by these charges is modest – between £1 and 4 million a year (based on 400 applications x £2,389 x 1-4). But the value in goodwill lost or part lost through this charge at the moment servicemen and women leave the armed forces is considerable – and it irks many members of the public that our nation looks mean spirited to those who volunteered to join us.

In the short term this problem could be remedied by amending the annually set Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations to exclude Commonwealth armed forces personnel and their dependents. A longer-term legislative solution might be to amend the provisions regarding armed forces immigration requirements set out in the Immigration Act 1971.

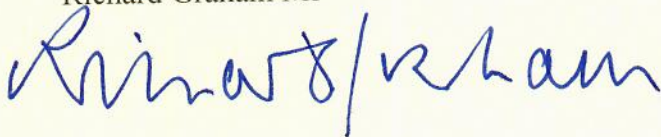
Any such change would also be in line with the spirit if not the letter of the Armed Forces Covenant, which dictates that all those who have served in the UK armed forces should be treated fairly.

The Armed Forces families support our Armed Forces Personnel through thick and thin, often making significant personal sacrifices to do so and their commitment to our nation should not be forgotten. Equally, no veteran who has served this country from a commonwealth nation should risk having their family split up due to not being able to afford these costs.

We would be grateful if you could look into this issue and consider what can be done to support those members of the Commonwealth Armed Forces community who wish to settle in the UK. We would of course be happy to explain further with a delegation representing the 133 MPs who have signed their support below.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Graham MP



Madeleine Moon MP



Darren Jones MP
Virendra Sharma MP
Chris Davies MP
Tim Loughton MP
William Wragg MP
Stephen Doughty MP
Sarah Newton MP
Rosie Cooper MP
Susan Elan Jones MP
Hilary Benn MP
Dame Caroline Spelman MP
Gordon Henderson MP
Mark Francois MP

Robert Courts MP
Bob Stewart MP
Guto Bebb MP
Glyn Davies MP
Ian Paisley MP
Sir Peter Bottomley MP
Stephen Kerr MP
Jess Phillips MP
Stephen Morgan MP
Catherine West MP
Steve Double MP
Dr Lisa Cameron MP
Kevin Barron MP

Alex Sobel MP
Diana Johnson MP
Kerry McCarthy MP
Ruth Jones MP
Gareth Thomas MP
Roberta Blackman-Woods MP
Steve Baker MP
Roger Gale MP
Jessica Morden MP
Gareth Snell MP
Frank Field MP
Jack Lopresti MP
Janet Daby MP
Rebecca Pow MP
Robert Halfon MP
Sir Nicholas Soames MP
Leo Docherty MP
Rory Stewart MP
Gillian Keegan MP
Mark Garnier MP
Anne Marie Morris MP
Ruth Smeeth MP
Chris Elmore MP
Gerald Jones MP
Derek Twigg MP
Royston Smith MP
Matthew Pennycook MP
Pauline Latham MP
Sheryll Murray MP
Eddie Hughes MP
Ruth Cadbury MP
Damien Moore MP
Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP
David Warburton MP
Richard Benyon MP
Mark Menzies MP
Scott Mann MP
Harriet Harman MP
Emma Hardy MP
Kevin Hollinrake MP
Andrea Jenkyns MP
Hugh Gaffney MP
Dan Jarvis MP
Nadine Dorries MP
Andrew Lewer MP

James Gray MP
Caroline Lucas MP
Emma Lewell-Buck MP
Tom Brake MP
Kate Green MP
Simon Hart MP
John Woodcock MP
Ben Lake MP
Albert Owen MP
Wera Hobhouse MP
Bob Neill MP
Tan Dhesi MP
Sir David Amess MP
George Freeman MP
Tom Tugendhat MP
Jeremy Lefroy MP
Paul Masterton MP
Richard Harrington MP
Luke Graham MP
Alex Chalk MP
Stephen Gethins MP
Tonia Antoniazzi MP
Jo Stevens MP
Geraint Davies MP
Bob Blackman MP
Zac Goldsmith MP
Nigel Evans MP
Sarah Wollaston MP
Marie Rimmer MP
Anna McMorrin MP
David Hanson MP
Kevin Brennan MP
Chi Onwurah MP
Giles Watling MP
Conor McGinn MP
Peter Aldous MP
Dr Julian Lewis MP
Jack Brereton MP
Judith Cummins MP
Drew Hendry MP
Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
Tony Lloyd MP
Angela Smith MP
Owen Paterson MP
Gareth Johnson MP

Andrew Griffiths MP
Ross Thomson MP
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