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Response to Oath of British values – January 2017

Thank you for contacting me about the proposed oath of British values for holders of public office.

The UK is home to many different cultures, and immigrants have made a significant contribution to this country. I am proud of the tolerance and respect that we show to people coming to this country from abroad, but that is not to say that tensions do not sometimes arise between communities. A review on community cohesion published by Dame Louise Casey shows that ethnic segregation is increasing in some areas, so we can do more to ensure that immigrants integrate fully into British society.

This review identified a need to establish a set of values around which people from all different backgrounds can unite. To this end, it suggested the introduction of an integration oath on arrival for immigrants intending to settle in Britain. The review also identified a need to increase standards of leadership and integrity in public office, suggesting that this could be done by developing a new oath for holders of public office.

These were recommendations which the Government will be responding to in the spring. Let me assure you, however, that any oath would not be about imposing a one-size-fits all identity on everyone in this country. If taken further, this would be about acceptance of fundamental British values, including tolerance and freedom of speech. I know that this Government would never adopt a policy that would impact on freedom of religion. Indeed, this is one of the fundamental British values that any oath would be designed to uphold.

Rest assured, the Government will be considering all views before making a final decision.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP