



Craig Whittaker MP

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Access to elected office fund

Thank you for contacting me about access to elected office for people with disabilities.

Like you, I feel very strongly that our public offices should reflect the diversity of our society. Sadly, the disabled population of this country is not sufficiently represented.

I want businesses and other organisations to place diversity and inclusivity at the heart of their work. To achieve this, politicians should lead by example. It is clear to me that political parties have a duty to ensure they encourage and support their candidates and employees, and ensure there is a completely level playing field when it comes to recruitment.

I am encouraged that the Government Equalities Office, together with the Office for Disability Issues and the Cabinet Office, will work with specialist organisations and people with disabilities over the next 12 months to help political parties best support candidates with disabilities. Although the main responsibility for this sits with political parties themselves, there are ways the Government can help them do this. Within the next year I hope to see political parties offering and advertising support, as well as measures in place for independent candidates.

While this work is ongoing, I know that colleagues in the Government Equalities Office want to ensure people with disabilities can still run for office. I welcome the creation of a fund of up to £250,000 to support candidates with disabilities. I look forward to more details on this when they are set out in due course.

This fund should not prevent political parties from continuing to develop their own measures. Instead, it should help them prioritise this extremely important issue and take action to ensure no one is disadvantaged in the democratic process.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP