



Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

7th December 2018

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

As faith leaders, we thank the Scottish Government for the leadership it has shown in bringing forward the Child Poverty Act and Child Poverty Delivery Plan, and we particularly welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to boosting the incomes of families by introducing a new income supplement.

Across Scotland, the faith communities that we represent bear witness every day to the poverty that exists in our country. Whether through providing foodbanks, delivering support to people who are homeless, or assisting families who are struggling to get by, we are often compelled to fill the gaps when the state's safety net has failed.

It is because of our work in local communities across Scotland, as well as the principles upon which we believe our society should be based, that we have a deep shared concern about current poverty forecasts, which suggest that child poverty will continue to rise in the years ahead. If these forecasts are correct and child poverty levels in Scotland reach 38% by 2027, this would represent a grave moral failing of our society.

Like you, we believe in a Scotland where every child can access the same choices and opportunities, where every family can live a life of dignity, and where the common good and well-being of all is paramount. But with so many children in Scotland currently living in poverty in Scotland, we are a long way away from that vision becoming a reality.

We believe that because of this, there is a compelling argument to act with greater urgency in implementing the income supplement. Given the levels of poverty that currently exist in Scotland, we urge you to consider using the budget to deliver the income supplement in the next year, rather than by the current timescale of 2022. Doing so would reflect the great need that families across Scotland must be lifted out of poverty right now, rather than in several years' time.



As supporters of the Give Me Five campaign, we ask that – as well as bringing forward the delivery of the supplement – you also consider doing so via topping up child benefit, which would immediately lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty.

A basic moral test of any society is how it treats those who have the least. To help us meet this test and to build upon the Scottish Government's work in tackling poverty, we urge you to use this budget to expedite the delivery of the income supplement. Families who are living in poverty now simply cannot wait.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Rev Susan Brown, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

The Most Rev Mark Strange, Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness, and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

Joan Cook, President of the Scottish Unitarian Association

Bishop William Nolan, President of Justice and Peace Scotland on behalf of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland