**SUBJECT LINE**

Pledge your support for extending free bus travel

**LETTER**

Dear [insert MSP/candidate name],

**Everyone Aboard: pledge your support for extending free bus travel to everyone receiving Universal Credit and all young people under 25.**

Ahead of the Scottish Parliament election, I am writing to you as a candidate for [constituency name] urging you to pledge your support for the Poverty Alliance’s *Everyone Aboard* campaign. The campaign calls for free bus travel to be extended to everyone receiving Universal Credit (and other low-income benefits) and all young people under 25.

As a society, we believe we should look out for each other. But those whose finances have suffered most during the pandemic, people on low incomes and young people under 25, risk being left behind in our economic recovery. This includes constituents in [constituency name].

During lockdown, we all experienced feeling trapped. For people living in poverty, the constant pressure of a low income meant this was an all too familiar experience.

For young people under 25, going to college, university, or taking part in society can feel like a privilege they cannot afford, rather than a right they possess. Under 25s have been hit hard by the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis, particularly in relation to employment. As we begin to recover from the effects of the pandemic, access to the labour market will be more important than ever for young people. Free bus travel will help facilitate this.

Women, too, have been hit especially hard by the crisis. For many women, balancing work, unpaid care, and tight budgets is an ongoing struggle. Women disproportionately rely on buses and are more likely to be living in the grip of poverty, so removing the burden of high ticket costs would help to loosen that grip.

In the next Scottish Parliament, we can reach our child poverty reduction targets. However, bold action will be required. Free buses can play a role in helping to reach our child poverty targets by opening access to employment, education, and extra-curricular development opportunities, especially for groups such as lone parents who are more reliant on buses and more likely to live in poverty.

Greater access to free bus transport will not only help tackle poverty, reduce geographical inequalities and help increase access to essential services, it is also good for the environment. Extending free bus travel to more young people and those receiving Universal Credit would encourage a shift towards public transport use and help make sure no one gets left behind as we transition to more sustainable ways of travelling.

The next Scottish Parliament has the chance to build a Scotland for all of us, one where no one is left behind. On the road to recovery, we can make sure everyone has a seat, by providing free bus travel to everyone receiving Universal Credit (and other low-income benefits) and to all young people under 25.

It would mean a lot, as a potential constituent of yours, if you would join leading anti-poverty groups, children’s charities, trade unions, faith groups and environmental organisations in Scotland in supporting this policy.

I look forward to hearing your response.

Yours sincerely,

[insert your name]