***Email to send to your local Member of Parliament (MP)***

Dear ….

**British Sign Language (BSL) Bill – Private Member’s Bill**

Today - 18th March 2021 - is the 18th year since the then UK Government formally recognised BSL as a language in its own right. The Government of the time also promised to look into a legal status for BSL. Eighteen years on, we are still waiting. This is unacceptable. The Welsh and Scottish Gaelic Languages have been officially recognised yet our language – British Sign Language – which is the UK’s fourth indigenous language, remains ignored.

**Therefore I am writing to you, as my local MP, to ask if you are prepared to introduce a BSL Bill, this May 2021, should your name be drawn in the Member’s Private Bill ballot.** Please see a copy of the British Deaf Association’s Briefing Notes with a draft of the BSL Bill.

This week is the British Deaf Association’s annual Sign Language Week with the theme of ‘Sign Language for All’. See [**http://signlanguageweek.org.uk/**](http://signlanguageweek.org.uk/) This was set up to celebrate the original BSL Recognition Day (18th March 2003) but we no longer want to celebrate lip-service and token gestures. We want the key to unlock the door to towards a legal status for BSL – our language - via a UK-wide BSL Act.

You may be aware that MSs in the Senedd voted to support a Proposal for a BSL Bill on 24th February 2021. The return of the Northern Ireland Assembly in Stormont last January 2020 included a renewed commitment to the BSL/ISL legislation framework and there has been significant work on this in recent months. We are hopeful this will become law within the next 12 or 18 months. In Scotland, Members of the Scottish Parliament - from all the political parties – unanimously voted to pass the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. Many of the UK’s political parties have already committed to supporting a BSL Act in their General Election manifestos. Whatever your political views, your support for this is vital.

It’s a very important time for the Deaf Community and our need for the legal recognition of our language. Our rights and access to information and equality are even more critical now as we have seen due to the impact of the dreadful Covid-19 pandemic with the lack of access, information and services. We do not want to wait another year, never mind eighteen years. We want the key to open the door to a BSL Act now. You can make this happen!

**Please confirm you will be happy to introduce a BSL Bill if your name is drawn out of the PMB Ballot.**

I look forward to hearing from you.  Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

*Your name*

*Your address and post code*