Dear [*insert NAME OF MP*]

**House of Commons – backbench legal aid debate – 27 June**

I write as your constituent to ask you to attend the Backbench Business Committee General Debate on Legal Aid Reform on Thursday 27 June, secured by Liberal Democrat MP Sarah Teather and Labour MP David Lammy.

Following the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 the Government has proposed more damaging cuts to legal aid in its [“Transforming Legal Aid” consultation](https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/transforming-legal-aid) that closed on 4 June. The proposals would introduce price competitive tendering for criminal defence work, a residence test to determine eligibility for legal aid and restrict access to judicial review. The consultation received around 16,000 responses which the MoJ is currently considering.

Changes to the legal aid system will be brought in by way of secondary legislation in early autumn 2013 therefore the debate on 27 June may be the one chance that MPs have to scrutinise the proposals. It may also be the only chance you have as my MP to put forward the views of your constituents on this issue of great importance that impacts upon the British justice system.

The proposals have attracted high profile attention recently, with the President of the Supreme Court, Lord Neuberger, cautioning against the false economy of the cuts. On 18 June he said that *“...it is vital for the Ministry to appreciate that any changes which are made to reduce legal aid and cut the cost of litigation are likely to have a knock-on effect on the cost of the courts. Less legal aid means more unrepresented litigants and worse lawyers, which will lead to longer hearings and more judge-time*”.

As a member of Young Legal Aid Lawyers, I am also concerned that the proposals will reduce the quality of legal representation funded by legal aid (which will ultimately impact on your constituents), undermine the rule of law and irretrievably damage a publicly funded legal advice system which is the envy of the world. They will also make it more difficult for junior lawyers to enter the profession and will impact upon social mobility within the sector as the number of providers is cut.

*[ADD PERSONAL COMMENT IF YOU WISH]*

I would ask you to attend the debate on 27 June to raise these concerns on my behalf. If you are unable to attend the debate I would ask you to discuss my concerns with the Ministry of Justice and urge them not to bring in such disastrous proposals.

Young Legal Aid Lawyers will be producing a briefing before the debate. Please let me know if it would be useful for me to send you a copy.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this email.

Yours sincerely

*NAME
ADDRESS WITH POSTCODE*