

The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

14th July 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to express my concern about yesterday's announcement that public sector pay rises will be funded in large part through increased costs on migrant workers.

It is right and proper that the government has decided not to ignore the recommendations of the public sector pay review bodies; those working in the public sector provide vital services to the country and deserve to be properly remunerated. Non-public sector employers, such as those in the university sector, need to take note and bring forward improved offers for their staff.

However, the decision to fund the public sector pay rise in part by increasing the NHS surcharge and visa costs facing migrants is a deeply damaging and divisive move.

First and foremost, it is wrong to place a disproportionate cost burden on one group of workers simply because they are migrants. Many migrant staff work in the public sector and will effectively be charged for their own pay rise.

Second, this move sends a deeply damaging message about the value we place on those who choose to come and work in the UK from abroad. It shows that the hostile environment for migrant workers is alive and well. It will act as a major disincentive to attracting the skilled workers we need in many of our professions – not least in higher education where over 70,000 academic staff are international.

Migrant staff and students make a huge contribution to our further education colleges and universities, and more broadly to our economy and our society. They already face huge additional costs compared to UK workers and it is unacceptable that they should be treated baldly as a revenue raising device.

Workers who do crucial jobs in our society cannot continue to face a cost-of-living crisis that impoverishes them, but the solution is not to further impoverish migrant workers. The government should commit to respecting public sector workers and paying them properly without pitting their interests against those of migrants.

In light of the points raised above, I urge you to reverse the decision to raise the cost of visas and the NHS surcharge.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey dotted background. The signature consists of a large, stylized 'J' followed by the name 'Grady' in a cursive script.

Dr Jo Grady
General Secretary