



2018-12/005 T:D102

December 14, 2018

Maori Affairs Committee
Parliament
Te Whanganui A Tara

Tēnā koe

Electoral (Entrenchment of Māori Seats) Amendment Bill

Te Rūnanga o Aotearoa, NZNO (Te Rūnanga) is the leading representative of the largest professional Māori nursing and nursing support workforce. Our 3,784 members comprise nurse practitioners, registered, enrolled and student nurses, midwives, kaimahi hauora, and health care assistants. We aim to improve health outcomes and equity for Māori, for whom good health encompasses wellness in its fullest sense¹.

Our members unanimously support the Bill and agree that the existing structural bias urgently needs to be addressed. We agree that Māori representatives are advocates of Māori aspirations and are accountable to Māori communities that vote for these seats. We strongly believe in Oritetanga and our members were horrified to learn that the entrenchment of Māori seats could so easily be abolished by a simple majority, rather than 75 percent or more majority of the house, which is the same protection as the general seats.

We agree that the Bill aims to correct an important constitutional issue to ensure Māori have a visibility and an equal voice as a right and as you have stated 'is essential for Māori health and wellbeing'. Further, this bill will send a message to all New Zealanders that valuing and respecting te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership, should be reflected in our laws. Māori 'voice at the table' needs to be protected in the same way as general electorate seats are protected.

As a predominantly Māori wahine rōpū, political representation is vital to improve the health and wellbeing of our future mokopuna and we strongly advocate for better Mana wahine representation in any parliamentary leadership roles, like Whaea tupuna, such as Iriaka Ratana, Whetu Tirikatene Sullivan, and Tariana Turia. We have previously submitted on the Crown Māori relationship portfolio, and are extremely supportive of the government bicultural and equity commitment.

Nāku noa nā

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¹ Aparangi Tautoko Auahi Kore. 2003. *National Māori Tobacco Control Strategy*. Wellington: Author.