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The Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House, Tothill Street
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SW1H 9NA

Our Ref: MP01739

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Dear Rt. Hon. Liz Kendall MP,

Universal Credit Payments

I am writing to you on behalf of Universal Credit claimants in my constituency who are struggling to meet their essential needs due to a structural shortfall in the system.

Universal Credit is designed to help unemployed and low-paid people meet their essential needs. Unfortunately, these essential needs are not being met. There is a glaring gap in Universal Credit's provisions: Every four years there is a 53-week year, but Universal Credit only provides for 52 weeks of payments, whatever the reality of the calendar may be.

This means that those who rely on Universal Credit to pay their rent are being asked to pay for an extra week that they have not been provided for. For many, this shortfall is impossible to cover, pushing them into financial distress.

I'm sure you can imagine the distress that this causes. However, there is a simple solution: Universal Credit payments should be adjusted to account for 53 weeks of rent in years where this occurs. This is a simple and logical solution that would relieve enormous amounts of strain from those who have been promised financial assistance for their essential needs, but who are currently finding themselves overstretched and underpaid.

Additionally, I would like to highlight another issue: Many housing associations require tenants to pay rent monthly in advance. However, as Universal Credit is issued as a single monthly payment, recipients often struggle to meet this requirement, exacerbating financial difficulties.

Could you confirm whether you support reforms to Universal Credit that would account for 53-week years? If not, what measures do you propose to protect claimants from these financial shortfalls?

Yours sincerely,

Dr Manuela Perteghella MP
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