

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Chair of the Home Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

1 October 2020

Dear Ms Cooper

Violence and Abuse Against Shopworkers

We are writing as a coalition representing the retail industry and the three million people employed in it to raise our concerns about the increasing problem of violence and abuse against shopworkers. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support for our campaign and for attending and speaking at the joint Parliamentary Reception we held in March 2020.

Assaults and abuse against retail workers was at an all-time high before coronavirus and has worsened over recent months as retail staff are on the front line, implementing new safety measures. The British Retail Consortium's (BRC) 2020 [Crime Survey](#) showed that every day, over 400 retail workers faced a torrent of violence and abuse in the workplace. Additionally, ACS's 2020 [Crime Report](#) found that there were over 50,000 violent incidents in local shops, and Usdaw's work highlights that, on average, a shopworker is abused, threatened, or assaulted 21 times a year. This is despite record spending by retailers who invested £1.2 billion on crime prevention measures in the last year.

These incidents are often the result of challenging shoplifters, enforcing age restricted sales and most recently, implementing social distancing measures. In some cases, our colleagues are threatened and attacked with weapons such as knives and syringes and since covid have even had people cough and spit at them. These incidents are not victimless crimes and have a serious impact, not only on the people running businesses and working in shops who experience physical injuries and psychological trauma, but also on the families they go home to and the communities they serve.

Retail workers have been described by the Government as Hidden Heroes and have been praised for their hard work to keep the nation fed and supplied with goods needed. We were therefore disappointed to see the Home Office reject our call for a standalone offence for assaults against retail workers in their [response](#) to the Call for Evidence. Ultimately, a change in the law would provide shopworkers with better protections and would send a strong and clear message that the Government and criminal justice system is on their side and will not tolerate incidents of abuse or violence.

We therefore write to you as Chair of the Home Affairs Committee to ask if the Committee would consider holding an inquiry which investigates this growing problem of violence and abuse against retail workers and the measures the Government should be taking to address it. The inquiry might also focus on the Government's response to the Call for Evidence on violence and abuse toward shop staff which we feel does not go far enough to keep our colleagues safe and protected. We would also be grateful if you would write to the Home

Secretary to ask what further measures the Government intends to take to put an end to this issue which is severely impacting our retail colleagues across the country.

We would be delighted to meet with you or Committee staff to discuss this further. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

James Lowman
Chief Executive
**Association of
Convenience
Stores**

Paddy Lillis
General Secretary
USDAW

Helen Dickinson
Chief Executive
**British Retail
Consortium**

Stuart Reddish
National President
**National Federation
of Retail
Newsagents**

