



## **Message of Support for the Freedom of Information Reform (Scotland) Bill from Idah Knowles, Independent Researcher**

Idah Knowles, an Independent Researcher and author of ‘Open Parliaments in Africa: Case Studies of Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, and the Pan-African Parliament’ (2025), who is based in Washington, praises the Freedom of Information Reform (Scotland) Bill.

“As an independent researcher working on transparency, accountability, and open parliaments, I welcome the Freedom of Information Reform (Scotland) Bill as a timely and well-grounded effort to strengthen access to information in a modern democratic context.

The Bill rightly recognizes that the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 came into force twenty years ago, and that methods of information processing and public service delivery have changed fundamentally since then. In response, the Bill seeks to ensure that the original policy objectives of freedom of information continue to be met by updating rights, duties, and enforcement mechanisms to reflect contemporary realities.

In particular, the Bill's emphasis on a presumption in favour of disclosure, a strengthened duty of proactive publication, and the replacement of outdated publication schemes with an enforceable Code of Practice reflects an important shift toward transparency by design, and a necessary change in culture and practice within public institutions.

Of particular significance is the Bill's focus on addressing accountability gaps created by outsourcing, arm's-length bodies, and evolving models of public service delivery. By strengthening mechanisms for designation, enhancing the enforcement powers of the Scottish Information Commissioner, and reinforcing compliance with codes of practice on publication and records management, the Bill responds directly to long-standing concerns raised by campaigners, journalists, and oversight bodies.”

**“In my comparative research on open parliaments and institutional accountability, I have seen that transparency reforms are most effective when they move beyond formal openness toward durable, enforceable practices that support public trust, scrutiny, and participation. The Freedom of Information Reform (Scotland) Bill represents an encouraging and thoughtful attempt to embed transparency as a durable institutional practice, rather than a discretionary commitment.”**

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