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To whom it may concern,

My name is Matthew Hicks, I live in Dudley in the West Midlands and have worked as a Pedlar for fifteen years. During this time I have never been arrested while practicing my trade. I therefore consider myself a legitimate pedlar.

Peddling allows a person to pick and choose when and where they work. This has afforded a degree of flexibility to my life and enabled me to look after my daughter, study at University and become a full time secondary schoolteacher. Indeed, it is an ideal occupation for students who want to avoid the burden of debt and many take up peddling while at university.

Being a newly qualified teacher I find that my salary is not enough to pay a mortgage and the inevitable debts incurred while at university. Nor is it sufficient to pay the bills and look after my daughter. It is for this reason that I continue to act as a pedlar in the West Midlands Centre where I sell Helium Balloons on Saturdays.

It is my belief that the Bournemouth Borough Council Bill and the Manchester City Council Bill could have an adverse affect upon my business. Should these bills pass I fear that many town centres in the West Midlands will take advantage of the bill and ban legitimate pedlars from selling in town centres. I believe that most councils will not offer alternative pitches for pedlars to sell and those that do will ask for a rent that will make a part time business unviable. Should this happen I believe that I would experience severe financial hardship and force me to sell up and move into lodgings. Such a scenario is not what I envisaged when I began training to teach.

Moreover, the impact of these bills will be far more serious for those who rely on peddling as their main income. Many student pedlars I know will be forced to compete for minimum wage jobs and rack up debts that they will be paying back for the rest of their lives. Other pedlars who work fair grounds in the summer months and pedal in the winter will have to consider changing their life styles completely.

As I am sure you are aware, the media often unfairly portray the people it writes about in an unfavourable light. It is partly for this reason that many people have a distorted view of who pedlars really are. For this reason, I would like to inform you that I have never sold counterfeit goods, always paid taxes and never sold goods that have been declared unfit by trading standards. Like the Eliza Doolittles' of the past, modern day pedlars are everyday honest people who are trying to get by on not a lot. In the past this country has been sympathetic to such people. Legitimate pedlars do not cause trouble in town centres and laws are already in place to deal with those that transgress. The Bournemouth and Manchester bills will be the final nail in the coffin for the little man and further monopolies big business's straggle hold business.

Yours Sincerely,
Matthew Hicks.

