

News Release

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LGBTQ Families Highlight their Cases of Inequality to Government

LGBTQ families took to the Dail as part of their campaign to highlight the ongoing delays in introducing legislation that would allow for legal parental recognition of their children. The legislation promised to LGBTQ families is now in its' 4th year with the Government with fundamental parts not even introduced to the Dail as yet. Families, friends and supporters of LGBTQ families went to the Dail to express their cases and call for progress. LGBT Ireland invited members of the Oireachtas to meet with families affected. Parental rights require the full commencement of the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015 and the enactment of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2017, but with both pieces of legislation still with Government this has left hundreds of parents and children without legal and state recognition.

The families went to the Dail to meet members of the Government and Oireachtas to say "we are here, we are real people that you represent but you are leaving us out and treating us unequally by way of stalled legislation, broken promises and a series of excuses and to ask why we are not treated the same as other families?."

LGBT Ireland has produced a video featuring families affected by the delays, which will be sent to all members of Dail & Seanad and the Ministers responsible for the legislation passing through.

The legislative process began pre the Marriage Equality referendum instigated by the then Minister for Justice, Frances Fitzgerald in the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015 and due to the nature of the legislation being cross departmental, key pieces of the Act has passed onto the desks of the Minister for Health, Simon Harris, Justice, Charlie Flanagan and Regina Doherty in Social Protection.

Legislation to fix errors in part 9 of the CFR Act now set to be a stand alone bill but this was only announced last week and has not even begun its' passage through the Dail & Seanad which will take a few months according to the Minister for Social Protection. The AHR bill went to Health Committee scrutiny but no further progress has been made to date. Families have written to each member of the Health Committee and while some have received answers on the delays, no clear timeline has been issued on the matter, causing "huge frustration and anger among Irish families," according to Paula Fagan, CEO LGBT Ireland. She added "we felt very hopeful last summer when the Government committed to urgently progressing the remaining actions needed to enable legal recognition for our families, and yet here we are in 2019 still waiting, which is creating more uncertainty and anxiety for those affected."

Lack of recognition has hugely negative impacts for families and the campaign highlights these inequalities; such as - For the non-birth parent it is not possible to be named on their child's birth certificate, apply for a passport for their child or consent to any medical treatments. Both bills are linked via the provisions relating to the regulation of donor assisted human reproduction carried out

in the state and many reasons have been cited by the Government for the 4 year delay. Most recently the discovery of 'technical errors' in Part 9 of the Children and Family Relationships Act has delayed the legislation however, as Ms Fagan highlighted, aswell as fixing these errors important administrative and operational arrangements also need to be put in place to ensure that once this Bill has been commenced parents can get the documents they need without further delays. And while the Dept of Health has issued a statement to say they are working with officials from the Department of Justice, Health and Social Protection to put these arrangements in place, no details of the timeline has been given which leaves us very concerned that this will lead to further delays" LGBT Ireland is calling on this to be a priority of Government and excuses like "technical errors" cannot be tolerated any longer and 4 years is too long, unacceptable and unjust pointing out to date 6 deadlines for enactment have already been missed."

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