

Press Release

30 January 2019

Down Syndrome Ireland says children with Down syndrome being actively discriminated against during Leinster House briefing today

Students with Down syndrome are being denied their right to an effective education due to a lack of resources and training for teachers, Down Syndrome Ireland has said.

Representatives from the charity appeared in Leinster House today (Wed) calling on the Government to adequately resource and roll out a national training programme for teachers in mainstream schools.

The call comes after Teachers' Unions the ASTI and TUI advised their members to stop implementing individualised education plans for students with additional needs, such as those with Down syndrome, due to a lack of funding and adequate training provided to their members.

Parents and children with Down syndrome appeared in a briefing in front of TDs and Senators hosted by Fianna Fail TD Niamh Smyth and Spokesperson on Disability Margaret Murphy O'Mahony asking **'Please don't leave us behind'** in the charity's campaign to ensure full inclusion in our nation's classrooms.

Mary Doherty, President of Down Syndrome Ireland, said: "Children with Down syndrome must be set up to succeed and not to fail. This simply will not happen without adequate resourcing, teacher training and critical individualised education plans for children with additional needs.

"As a parent of a child with Down syndrome, this exclusion from vital education supports is unfair and discriminatory. Is it the intention of the Irish education system and Government to leave children with Down syndrome behind, and strip them of the right to learn at their pace?"

The charity - which represents 3,500 people with Down syndrome and their families across the country - is also calling for the July Provision programme, which provides funding to extend the school year for children with certain special needs, to be extended to all children with Down syndrome.

Extending the programme to all children with Down syndrome would cost just €1m a year, the charity estimates.

"Children with Down syndrome need the additional support during the Summer months so they can catch up with their peers and stay in mainstream education. By limiting July Provision, children with Down syndrome are actively discriminated against. Enough is enough – we demand change now.

“Our children’s futures are in the hands of the Government as we ask **‘Please Don’t Leave Us Behind’**,” Mary continued.

ENDS

Notes to editor:

****Parents available for interview****

About Down Syndrome Ireland

Established in 1971, Down Syndrome Ireland is the voice of people with Down syndrome and their families throughout Ireland. The charity has over 3,500 members with 25 branches nationwide.

The charity provides an ‘all-through-life’ supports to people with Down syndrome and their families across Ireland with specialists in the areas of health, speech and language, early development, education, adult education and employment and adult advocacy issues that enhance the lives of thousands of children and adults with Down syndrome across the country. The charity is the biggest single group concerned with the welfare of people with a learning disability in Ireland.

Media Queries:

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