

Mr Roderic O’Gorman T.D.
Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2
D02 XR20

8th April 2021

Re: Consultation on Paid Leave for Domestic Violence legislation

Dear Minister O’Gorman,

I am writing to express SIPTU’s support for the swift introduction of a statutory entitlement to paid leave in cases of domestic violence, in line with the position articulated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions’ (ICTU) in its submission on this matter.

See ICTU submission here:

https://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/ictu_submission_on_paid_leave_in_cases_of_domestic_violence_march_2021.pdf.

The basic aim should be to legislate along the lines of Sinn Fein’s 2019 Bill, which provides the legal right for up to 10 days of domestic violence paid leave.

The key objective must be to help victims (predominantly women) maintain financial security when seeking to leave violent relationships. If a woman or man has little option but to use annual leave that is relied on for other purposes, or has recourse only to unpaid leave, she/he may be more reluctant to break free from their predicament, especially if the abuser exercises financial control and monitoring. Given that women are more likely to work part-time or on a casual basis, any loss of income could be a significant constraint on their ability to extract themselves, and possibly their children, from danger.

SIPTU represents many thousands of vulnerable workers across low-paid sectors such as hospitality, cleaning, childcare and care services who may be particularly constrained by financial limitations. Legislation guaranteeing paid leave in the case of domestic violence would be an important step to alleviating this concern and should apply to all workers, not just permanent employees.

SIPTU's Equality Committee has been campaigning over decades on the domestic violence as a workplace issue and assisting our members who are the victims of domestic violence when they ask for our support. Domestic violence is suffered silently by many and is under-reported because victims fear negative social judgement. The legislation that government has committed to introduce on paid leave for domestic abuse should not impose barriers for those who wish to regain control of their lives. For instance, there should be no onerous requirements for proof which would discourage take-up of the entitlement, in line with the legal approach in New Zealand. Furthermore, confidentiality at the workplace should be assured so that victims know that they will be supported and treated sensitively if they come forward.

Alongside Congress, SIPTU calls for the legislation to have flexibility so that it can be taken in hours, not just days. This would facilitate victims to attend appointments/services or court sittings that may occur at different times over a period.

Finally, SIPTU welcomes the opportunity afforded by the consultation to express our views on the proposed legislation. If you require any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,



Ethel Buckley
Deputy General Secretary
Organising & Membership Development