



Press Release Wednesday 10th September 2014

Bill to End Job Discrimination Needs to Provide Certainty

GLEN welcomes the announcement by Minister of State at the Department of Justice & Equality, Aodhán Ó Ríordáin that he will advance legislation to amend Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act.

“No worker in any workplace publically funded or otherwise, should be faced with the threat of discrimination because of who they are”, said Sandra Irwin-Gowran, Director of Education Policy with GLEN.

“LGBT people working in any religious run employment should enjoy the same protections as any worker; so a gardener who is gay working in a convent should be as protected as a gardener who is gay working for the OPW”, continued Irwin-Gowran.

“The legislation must ensure that all employees can clearly see from its wording that their livelihoods cannot be put at risk because of their sexual orientation or relationship status. The wording of the Bill must not create any new grounds for people in Ireland to fear discrimination at work”, continued Irwin-Gowran.

GLEN has been working with Teacher Union organisations over many years to have the threat posed by Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act addressed. **“Legislation is urgently needed to provide employment protection for countless workers in religious run workplaces, such as schools, across Ireland”**, continued Irwin-Gowran.

“Another school year has got underway with many LGBT teachers continuing to feel the ‘chilling effect’ of Section 37. We need to quickly get to the point where no threat, or perception of a threat, exists for their employment because of their LGBT identity or civil status” said Irwin-Gowran.

“There is a link between homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools and a ‘fear factor’ for lesbian and gay teachers being open about their lives. Removal of uncertainty will be an important building block in ensuring that schools can urgently and comprehensively address bullying in our schools, as required by the Department of Education Anti-Bullying Procedures for schools”, said Irwin-Gowran.

“We welcome the Minister’s commitment to bring forward the necessary legislation and look forward to working with him, and with all political parties, to remove this threat to workers and to ensure that there is certainty for all workers in all employments” concluded Irwin-Gowran.

Ends.

For further information:

Sandra Irwin-Gowran 087 7960615 or
Brian Sheehan (086) 2330417

Editors Note

- The Bill currently before the Oireachtas was introduced in March 2013 by Labour Senator Ivana Bacik. The Bill aims to ensure that no public sector worker can be discriminated against on the basis of their civil or family status or sexual orientation.
- Following a public consultation on section 37 (1) The Irish Human Rights Commission Designate published a recommendations paper in April 2014. The Commission recommend section 37(1) should be amended to ensure the rights of all individuals to a workplace free from discrimination.