Deputy,

As one of your constituents, I want to bring to your attention that in 2015, the International Protection Act 2015 was passed by the Oireachtas. The legislation significantly restricted the rights of refugees to family reunification. I would like the new Dáil to address this by enacting legislation which would restore family reunification rights.

The reality of the International Protection Act provisions means that the vast majority of LGBTQI+ refugees will remain unable to realise their rights to family reunification with same-sex spouses or partners. The legislation restricts spousal family reunification to spouses who were married prior to the refugee seeking protection in Ireland. In the majority of refugee producing countries, same-sex sexual activity is illegal. It is possible that the refugee fled their country because of persecution based on their sexual orientation and it would be unrealistic to expect, in these circumstances, couples to have married prior to the refugee fleeing their country of origin.

The legislation also removed the right to apply for extended family members. This means that refugees who have families which include children over the age of 18 cannot be reunited with them. The devastation this can cause to families is highlighted by the Sido family’s story. The brothers, originally from Aleppo, were resettled in Ireland from Greece as part of the Government’s relocation programme for unaccompanied minors. The brothers were granted refugee status in Ireland and were eligible to apply for the parents and for two of their younger brothers. They had to leave their sister Nermin behind as she was just over 18. Nermin had never lived apart from her family before.

The International Protection (Family Reunification) (Amendment) Bill 2017 would have restored the right of refugees to apply for extended family members and it received widespread support. However, the government would not pass a ‘money message’ and the bill lapsed when the Dail was dissolved. The Bill had been scrutinised by the Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality. The Oireachtas Committee welcomed and supported the Bill as rectifying the undue restrictions introduced in the International Protection Act 2015.

I want to ask for your support for a new bill in this Dail which would restore family reunification rights.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

NAME