

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON GENDER EQUALITY 2020

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday 2 March 2020 07:33

To: Citizens Assembly 2019 <info@citizensassembly.ie>

Subject: Public Consultation - Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality 2020

Dear Members of Assembly on Gender Equality,

Please find my submission below.

I felt many of the questions overlapped so rather provided my submission as written below.

Yours Faithfully

Patricia Ramsay
[REDACTED]

Public Consultation - Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality 2020

The challenges, barriers and the attitude of general society are affected by the laws of the land. We wish to have a society that both allows and expects men and women to contribute equally to all areas of life from parenting, decision making and in the workplace. The current legislation makes this more difficult.

Currently when one is interviewing people for work positions there is an awareness that if a woman is taken on then there is a real risk if she is of child bearing age, that she may take time off for maternity leave or other caring duties. This may interfere with her prospects of getting the job and also promotion if she does take leave afterwards. This prejudice is often subconscious but none the less real. If the man had equal leave enshrined in law when a baby is born it likely would reduce this prejudice, change societies view of men and create an expectation for men to become meaningfully involved with the children.

This issue relating to gender equality and need for change starts at the beginning of a child's life. Society must confer on children the right to be parented equally by both parents. Society must both expect it and require men and women to contribute equally to the care of their children.

This changed expectation by society would empower women who hopefully would now see themselves as more than carers. It would make it easier to both encourage women and free women to participate equally in the workplace, minimize the risk of pay discrimination and give women confidence to go into/apply for more senior positions.

The following are some suggestions for change in our laws which I believe would help:-

- That men and women have joint custody of their children regardless of marital status (unless it not in the children's best interest). This measure would give a clear message that father's have an equal responsibility to care for their children and not just in a financial way.
- That paternity leave should be increased to facilitate the above. Ideally Paternity leave should be paid at the full rate of pay to enable father's to take the time off. While the recent increase of parental leave of two weeks (total now being 4 weeks for fathers) is to be welcomed it massively falls short. These extra two weeks are paid at the minimal rate in the public sector often making it impossible for the fathers to take the financial hit of taking this time off. This compares to 26 weeks at full pay for mothers in the public sector. The public sector leads in this regard and the hope is that the private sector would follow their lead.
- Same sex couples should also have equal rights to their children and their children to them. Currently if a same sex couple have a child one or both of them are not recognized as parents for maternity/paternity leave. This means they are discriminated against by society and in the workplace. In same male sex couples the best case scenario and most time that can be taken off is one parent getting two weeks at full pay if in the public sector and two weeks at the minimal rate. The other parent gets nothing.

The areas I have referred to would be relatively easy to change and it would encourage society to view men and women more equally.

