



Deputy Seán Crowe,
Chair, Joint Committee on Health
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2 D02 XR20
18 February 2022

Re: Concerns re. proposed legislative revisions to Mental Health Act 2001 preventing timely access to treatment and care

Dear Mr. Crowe,

The College of Psychiatrists of Ireland is the sole accredited training, education and professional body for Psychiatry in Ireland, representing 1,000 psychiatrists (both specialists and trainees) across the country. The mission of the College is to promote excellence in the practice of Psychiatry.

EGM held due to major concerns with current General Scheme of the Mental Health (Amendment) Bill

Involuntary treatment under the Mental Health Act 2001 applies to only a small and highly vulnerable minority of the patients of mental health services: those with the most severe and debilitating episodes of psychosis, mania and severe depression form the majority of patients who receive lifesaving treatment under this Act.

Such is members' concern with aspects of the proposed amendments to the Mental Health Act 2001, and the potential to deny our patients access to treatment for those with severe mental illnesses, that the College held an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) recently (03/02/22) on the draft Heads of Bill. Two emergency motions were passed by an overwhelming majority (just over seventy percent).

The motions carried were a) we cannot support the current draft Heads of Bill and b) a commitment to engage robustly with all relevant stakeholders in the legislative process (see motions below).

Psychiatrists, as specialist doctors, work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, community settings, people's homes, residential centres, nursing homes and prisons. They work with the Mental Health Act on a daily basis for those with severe mental illness, across the lifespan of the population.

As advocates for people's right to access timely, evidence-based, specialist treatments we believe the proposed amendments to the Act, as they currently stand, will deny our patients this fundamental right. It will prolong suffering and potentially increase risk to our patients, their families and the general public.

We remain available to engage with members of the Joint Committee on Health and the Sub Committee on Mental Health on any aspect of the draft Heads. However, in view of the concerns expressed by College members (who will



be centrally involved in implementing the revised Act, and the subsequent impact on the care that they can provide for patients), we urgently seek a meeting with the Joint Oireachtas Committee and/or Sub Committee on Mental Health to discuss these issues further and find appropriate and necessary solutions suitable.

Yours sincerely,

Council

Dr William Flannery	President
Dr Lorcan Martin,	Vice-President and Director of PCS
Dr Aoibhinn Lynch	Dean and Director of Postgraduate Training
Dr Maeve Doyle	Director of Communications and Public Education
Dr Mike Scully	Treasurer and Chair of Law committee
Dr Imelda Whyte	Chair, Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Dr Edyta Truszkowska	Chair, Faculty of Addiction Psychiatry
Dr Maeve Moran	Chair, Faculty of Learning Disability Psychiatry
Dr Daniel Herlihy	Chair, Faculty of Social & Rehabilitation Psychiatry
Dr Udo Reulbach	Chair, Faculty of Medical Psychotherapy
Dr Ronan Mullaney	Chair, Faculty of Forensic Psychiatry
Dr Anne Doherty	Chair, Faculty of Liaison Psychiatry
Dr Aoife Hunt	Chair, Faculty of Adult Psychiatry
Dr Aoife Ni Chorcorain	Chair of Faculty of Psychiatry of Old Age
Prof Paul Fearon	Chair, Faculty of Academic Psychiatry
Dr Michele Hill	Chair, Faculty of Youth & Student Psychiatry
Dr Micheál O'Cuill	Chair, Postgraduate Training Committee
Dr Ciaran Clarke	Chair, Human Rights & Ethics Committee
Prof Mary Cannon	Elected Member
Dr Mary Cosgrave	Elected Member
Dr Rebecca Conlan Trant	Trainee Committee (BST),
Dr Sarah Casey	Co-Chair, Trainee Committee (HST)
Dr Aoife O'Callaghan	Co-Chair, Trainee Committee (HST)
Dr Mia McLaughlin	Joint-Chair, REFOCUS
Mr. Brian McNulty	Joint-Chair, REFOCUS

For Information:

Motion One

'Medical professionalism is a core element of being a good doctor. Good medical practice is based on a relationship of trust between the profession and society in which doctors are expected to meet the highest standards of professional practice and behaviour and are enabled by state legislation to do so. Consequently, we are unable to support the proposed revisions to the Mental Health Act as they will prevent us from providing the evidence based psychiatric treatment that our patients are entitled to receive. As advocates for our patients with Schizophrenia, Bipolar Affective Disorder and other mental illness we have an ethical duty to advocate for their access to appropriate healthcare. These proposals will prevent them from receiving appropriate healthcare and is not in their best interests.'

Motion Two

'That the College will continue to engage robustly with the legislature in relation to the proposed amendments to the Mental Health Act 2001, and that when the final draft Bill is published there will be further consultation with the membership. The outcome of this consultation will be provided to the legislature.'