

## Motion re: Healthcare Staffing

That Dáil Éireann -

acknowledges that:

- understaffing in the public health service is impacting the ability of staff to provide safe care and this will put patients at risk and damage efforts to retain existing staff;
- the health recruitment moratorium has continued through new recruitment caps and positions are being left vacant in acute hospitals and community care;
- thousands of frontline health positions that were suppressed during the recruitment moratorium were 'decommissioned' by the Pay and Numbers Strategy in July 2024 and in effect abolished;

notes that:

- hospitals are already seeing record overcrowding before the winter surge, and more than 700,000 people were on hospital waiting lists at the end of September;
- nearly €650 million or 3% of the entire health budget was spent on agency staff in 2023 and further substantial sums go to overtime costs and external management consultants;
- positions that become vacant due to retirement, a person leaving the health service or maternity leave are not being ringfenced for backfilling;
- Regional Health Areas are allocated a total number of positions to fill, with no clear plan for which positions will be prioritised;

further notes that:

- the derogations that had existed for areas like Emergency Department nurses and midwives have been removed and instead of six months it is now taking up to a year to fill nursing and midwifery roles;
- the INMO says many nursing posts in cancer, palliative, paediatric, and rehab care are being left vacant;
- a survey of 4,000 members of Fórsa's Health and Welfare division showed 88% said there was a vacancy in their department, and 73% said it had a very negative impact on staff;
- the failure to recruit enough therapists into CDNTs is compounding waiting lists for assessment of needs and therapies;
- SIPTU has highlighted that 30% more radiation therapists are needed, and that the staffing crisis is causing delays in cancer treatment;
- staff deficits also exist in the National Ambulance Service, radiography, support services, the Health Care Support assistant workforce and other critical areas;

supports the decision of health trade unions to protest over the Pay and Numbers strategy and condemns the failure of the Minister and the HSE to consult with health trade unions;

calls on the Minister for Health to:

- lift the new recruitment moratorium under the HSE's Pay and Numbers Strategy and commit to restoring the staff positions abolished in 2023 and 2024;
- fund the additional recruitment needed for appropriate staffing and the expansion of services to account for demographic changes and the implementation of Sláintecare;
- ensure that vacancies that arise in the health service due to normal retirement, career progression and maternity leave can be filled by local clinical management;
- pass the Patient Safety (Licensing) Bill to introduce safe staffing ratios that will be enforced by HIQA and resource the recruitment of staff to comply with the Framework for Safe Nurse Staffing and Skills Mix;

- commit to engaging with unions on a safe staffing framework for all departments and grades.
- *Duncan Smith, Ivana Bacik, Brendan Howlin, Alan Kelly, Ged Nash, Seán Sherlock.*