



## Opening Statement –Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children and Equality

Mr. Andrew Holohan, Ms. Rebecca Gorman

17<sup>th</sup> July 2025

### Introduction

Thank you to the Chair for the invitation to the Add the 10<sup>th</sup> Alliance to appear before the Committee, we are very grateful for the opportunity. The Add the 10th Alliance of civil society organisations are calling for the inclusion of socio-economic disadvantage as a tenth ground in our equality legislation; it should be added at this stage to be included into the final agreed Acts.

### Socio-Economic Discrimination in Ireland

Discrimination for people facing socio-economic disadvantage is a rising concern for communities across Ireland. A recent CSO report from 2024 shows that 1 in 5 adults have experienced discrimination; In this group, 17% was based on socio-economic background, rising to 27% while looking for work. It is the most common ground for discrimination reported in health services (20%) and with An Garda Síochána (30%).

### Why Add the 10<sup>th</sup>?

Unlike the nine protected grounds, there is no legislation in place for people to seek redress when they encounter this type of discrimination. It is highly unfair that people are not protected against one of the most common forms of discrimination in Ireland.

The impact of this on people's lives and dignity is very clear. It is a collective experience in disadvantaged communities and is experienced intersectionally by people who face other forms of discrimination. Not being included as a ground also means socio-economic status is not covered in other proactive policy measures.

We should be proud of having robust protections in our society that aim to leave no one behind. Now is the opportunity to realise that aim and add disadvantaged socio-economic status into our legislation.

### Andrew – The Collective Experience of Socio-Economic Disadvantage

I'm Andrew and I am an ATD Ireland Community Activist.

Can you imagine a father from a disadvantaged area goes for multiple jobs interviews, he has all the qualifications, but he doesn't get the job because he is from this certain area, (the accent, the postcode) can you imagine the mental torture that he is going through? All that he wants to do is provide for his young family but he's not being given the chance. This all leads to stress, lack of sleep and basically, you're in a mental prison. Now today's men feel they need to provide for their family, and they put this mask on that everything is alright when it isn't.

When my wife was in hospital giving birth to our first child, the first person to visit her was a social worker, and because we had a history of addiction, the social worker came down on us pretty hard and this really made my wife afraid that our baby would be taken away. In the end the social worker visited our home and everything was fine.

But should this be the way you bring your first child into the world – with fear and discrimination, instead of support?

We asked my daughter, age 7, what she wanted to be when she grows up. She replied “a chef”. We then asked her do you think it would be fair if they didn't give you the job because of where you're from? she replied, “It would be unfair”. This is my fear, and this is why I fight for this because it needs to be gone.

These are not isolated incidents. They reflect a pattern of deep-rooted discrimination that continues to deny people dignity, opportunity, and fairness in Irish society.

Individuals affected by socio-economic discrimination have shared their stories with ATD Ireland through many platforms, see our ATD Ireland Socio-Economic Discrimination Resource Page.

Discrimination must end; so please, for the next generation please add the 10<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for listening.

The members of the Add the 10<sup>th</sup> Alliance are:

- o All Together in Dignity Ireland
- o Association of Higher Education and Disability
- o Community Action Network
- o Community Law and Mediation
- o Free Legal Advice Centres

- o European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland
- o Independent Living Movement Ireland
- o Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
- o Outhouse
- o Simon Communities of Ireland