



An Bille Sláinte (Leasú), 2026
Health (Amendment) Bill 2026

Meabhrán Miniúcháin
Explanatory Memorandum



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Background

Section 59(3) of the Health Act 1970 allows for the provision without charge of drugs, medicines or medical or surgical appliances to persons suffering from a precise disease or disability of a permanent or long term nature.

These drugs, medicines or medical or surgical appliances are then provided free of charge under a community health scheme known as the Long Term Illness (LTI) Scheme. The LTI scheme means that people who are diagnosed with a specified long-term disease or disability can get a range of medicines from their community pharmacy free.

The LTI scheme has been a great success since its establishment and aids thousands of people across the State.

However, the LTI scheme has not been updated in many decades; resultantly there are many different disabilities, ailments, and illness which we now know more about and are long term or life-long, but are not covered by the scheme.

In order to know the scheme is fit for purpose and delivering for those who need it, it is important that it is monitored and reviewed on a consistent basis.

This Bill amends the Health Act 1970 to ensure the effectiveness of the provision without charge of drugs, medicines or medical or surgical appliances to persons suffering from a precise disease or disability of a permanent or long term nature through a review every three years.

Purpose of the Bill

The law concerning the supply without charge of drugs, medicines or medical or surgical appliances is set out in the Health Act 1970. Under section 59(3) drugs, medicines or medical or surgical appliances can be provided free of charge to persons suffering from a precise disease or disability of a permanent or long term nature. The purpose of this Bill is to ensure that the health service and the public are kept updated on the effectiveness of the provision without charge of these drugs, medicines or medical or surgical appliances to persons suffering from a precise disease or disability of a permanent or long term nature and be a basis for future policy direction in this regard.

Provisions of the Bill

Section 1 inserts a new subsection (3A) into section 59 of the Health Act 1970. Subsection (3A) requires the Minister for Health (“the Minister”) to undertake ongoing periodic reviews into the effectiveness of arrangements for the supply without charge, in accordance with subsection (3), of drugs, medicines and appliances. Under paragraph (a), the first such review is to commence not later than 12 months after the passing of this Bill. The Minister must also commence a further review during each subsequent three year period. Under paragraph (b), the Minister must, within 6 months of commencing a review, publish a report of the findings and conclusions of the review on the website of the Department of Health and lay a copy of that report before each House of the Oireachtas.

Section 2 sets out the short title, collective citation and construction for the Act. These are standard form provisions.

*Louise O’Reilly TD, David Cullinane TD,
Meitheamh, 2026.*

