



**Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2019**  
**Joint Committee on Planning, Housing and Local Government, 24 October 2019**  
**Opening Statement: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government**

**Introduction**

On behalf of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, I thank the Chair and members for inviting us to attend today's discussion on the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2019

My name is Paul Lemass, and I am the Assistant Secretary for the Housing Policy, Legislation and Governance division of the Department.

I am joined by Rory O'Leary and Catherine Rawson from the AHB Policy and Regulation unit within this division.

I intend to keep my opening remarks brief in order to dedicate as much time as possible to addressing questions members may have on the Bill.

**Background**

It is fair to say that this Bill has been in development for a significant period of time, and it is welcome that it has now been advanced to this stage.

In September 2015, the then Government gave its approval to the drafting of the Bill. Pre-Legislative Scrutiny was undertaken in December 2015 and the report of the Committee was laid before the Oireachtas in February 2016.

As the Committee is aware, the Bill was published in July this year and Second Stage was completed in the Dáil on 25 September.



## **Purpose of the Bill**

The Bill aims to safeguard public and private investment in the social housing provision sector, to enable increased supply from the voluntary and co-operative housing sector and to ensure that the assets built through investments are managed sustainably.

The statutory regulatory framework will provide further assurances to investors, tenants, the Government and to the sector itself that social housing providers operate in a well-regulated and stable environment.

The Bill intends to establish an independent Regulator to oversee the effective governance, financial management and performance of approved housing bodies.

The Regulator will be responsible for approving and registering housing bodies and the setting of regulatory standards.

The Bill provides for powers to the Regulator in relation to the undertaking of inquiries, investigations and assessments. The Regulator will also have enforcement powers.

## **Functions of the Regulator**

Briefly, some of the functions of the Regulator will be to:

- establish and maintain a register of AHBs,
- prepare draft standards for approval by the Minister, publish the approved standards, and monitor and assess compliance by AHBs with the approved standards and with the legislation more generally,
- carry out investigations in accordance with the Bill,
- where appropriate, to protect the assets of AHBs and in certain circumstances to cancel their registration in accordance with Part 6,
- encourage and facilitate the better governance, administration and management, including corporate governance and financial management, of AHBs by the provision of information and advice;



- with a view to promoting awareness and understanding, make available to the public information about the operation of the legislative arrangements being introduced under the Bill;
- collect information concerning AHBs for the purposes of the performance of the functions conferred on it by or under this Bill;
- publish such information (including statistical information) concerning AHBs, as appropriate.

### **Proposed Amendments**

A limited number of Government amendments to the Bill are being considered. These amendments are broadly technical in nature and relate to the substance of the Bill.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude Chair, I hope this provides a helpful summary and we are happy to take your questions and provide any additional clarification.

Thank you.