

**Opening Statement to Oireachtas
Committee on Justice,
on Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the Ban on
Sex for Rent Bill 2022**

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Cathaoirleach, Deputies, Senators, thank you for asking me before the committee today as you discuss the Ban on Sex for Rent Bill 2022.

The bill was introduced arising out of an investigation into sex for rent by the *Irish Examiner* since December 2021.

In September 2019, the then Solidarity TD Ruth Coppinger highlighted a case in which a constituent had been offered a sex for rent arrangement when she could not afford a rent increase.

In January 2020, this reporter discovered a sex for rent arrangement being advertised in the Lough, Cork city, on a website called Locanto, which carries a wide range of classified advertisements from Ireland and across the world.

One of the properties advertised in Limerick late last year on the same website, was for a single lady “with a twist”. The ad said: “Can do reduced rent for occasional fun”. When contacted by this reporter, posing as a prospective tenant, the landlord made it clear that sexual activity was required on a weekly basis in return for rent of €200 for the first month and €250 per month thereafter. To establish the veracity of the landlord and the existence of the property, this reporter went to the house in the guise of the prospective tenant and met the landlord at the door.

In particular, foreign women have been offered reduced or no rent in return for sex or bed-sharing with landlords in different parts of the country.

In recent weeks, a number of advertisements have appeared online targeting Ukrainian women with offers of accommodation in Ireland in return for sex. One relating to a property in Cavan was titled “Seeking a Ukraine woman” and was explicit in nature, offering a “free bed in exchange for sexual pleasure for me”. The advertiser added: “I can pick you up in Cavan if you can’t drive need this asap please???”

Such advertisements are still to be found online even as we discuss this legislation today. Some are explicit in their content, with recent ads offering “friends with benefits” arrangements, or a room for free for sweet girl in Dublin, for example.

However, testimony has been provided to the *Irish Examiner* by women offered sex for rent arrangements **after** they responded to rental accommodation advertisements on Facebook groups, classified advertisement websites and some more streamline accommodation websites, including daft.ie. In these instances, the offer was not mentioned in the advertisement.

Testimony from women previously targeted by such arrangements shows a reluctance to go to An Garda Síochána to make complaints, for reasons including a fear that they will not be believed or taken seriously.

On some occasions, those offering sex for rent arrangements are people who are sub-letting rooms unknown to their own landlord.

Information on the precise nature and extent of sex for rent arrangements in Ireland is sporadic and anecdotal, unlike in the UK, where research has been conducted by homeless organisation Shelter. The findings of that study suggested that 30,000 women in Britain were propositioned with sex for rent arrangements between March 2020 and January 2021.

No such research has yet been carried out in Ireland.