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TENI - Transgender Equality Network Ireland

Opening Statement to the Joint Justice Committee

on the General Scheme of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Agency Bill

18th April 2023

Presented by Tina Kolas Orban – Chief Executive TENI

I would like to thank the joint committee for the opportunity today to talk with you around the general scheme of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Agency Bill. TENI is Ireland's national NGO supporting trans and non-binary people across the country and our vision is a world where all people regardless of gender identity or expression enjoy full acceptance equality and Human Rights.

We applaud the positive measures contained within the bill that will lead to the formation of Ireland's first Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Agency a positive step for helping ensure equity of justice and developing further the routes and access to support those victims of Domestic, Sexual and Gender based violence across Ireland.

We are keen in supporting this proposal to ensure that the intentions of the authors of this bill in creating the new agency as an inclusive and effective body are realised to their fullest extent and seek to ensure that the needs and experiences of our trans and non-binary community members and particularly taking into consideration intersectional identities are centred.

As an organisation that provides direct support to the trans and non-binary community we are regularly faced with hearing the challenges that community members have to navigate when accessing public funded services. Whether it's the continued gate keeping and waiting lists experienced when trying to access gender affirming care or to the challenges many trans young people still face in receiving an inclusive environment at school, often the



specific needs and experiences of trans people are not at the heart of decision making and the expertise to tailor support and services can be lacking.

Head 19 of the Bill shows the clear intent to try to ensure a focus around equality in the outcomes of the board appointments but only as expressed in the bill in terms of gender, this understanding also fails to consider the reality of identities beyond the binary of men and women. This wording while admirable in its aim would see an exclusion of non-binary people in terms of this measure, with their reality invisible in the methodology being used. Beyond further consideration of this point, we would hope that further work could be made around including steps to ensure broader diversity within the agencies new board and the use of best practice measures such as diverse panels and other techniques.

It's vital from the start that the expertise and understanding of the needs of the diverse and intersectional trans community is a consideration when determining board appointments. We would appreciate hearing reassurance of what steps will be taken to ensure board members will have the experience and expertise around the needs of trans and non-binary people and how this will be built into the agency's formation.

One additional step which we would support in helping ensure the success of the agency is a clear commitment its formation that it will be fully trans inclusive. Many trans people often fear accessing domestic, sexual and gender based violence services due to the impact of ongoing media narratives in this area and the experiences globally of trans people having the gender denied or stigmatised at the very moment of them seeking support. While we are heartened by the inclusive approaches taken by many providers in this area across Ireland, it would be valuable to see this echoed at this historic moment in forming the new national Domestic, Sexual and gender based violence agency, role modelling an approach that we hope other EU and global jurisdictions will seek to replicate.

Thank you for considering both our submission and my opening comments.