

Statement on Traveller Mental Health Crisis for the Oireachtas:

The urgency of addressing the mental health crisis within the Traveller community cannot be overstated. Despite repeated acknowledgments by the all-party Oireachtas committee on mental health and former ministers, this crisis has persisted since the early 2000s, leaving a devastating toll on individuals and families.

In 2003, Mary Rose Walker's study revealed a stark reality: Traveller suicide rates were three times higher than the majority population, yet no significant action followed. Subsequent reports, including the Vision for Change in 2006 and the 2010 All-Ireland Traveller Health Study, echoed these concerns, identifying the Traveller community as a high-risk group in urgent need of culturally inclusive mental health services.

Despite these clear recommendations, tangible progress has been lacking. The 2017 national study by Behaviour and Attitudes reiterated the distressing impact of suicide within Traveller families, yet substantive measures to address this crisis remain elusive.

Calls for action have been made repeatedly, including by this esteemed assembly and is identified as an action within the programme for government . However, promises have not translated into meaningful change. Meanwhile, the Traveller community continues to endure unimaginable suffering, with lives lost on a distressingly regular basis.

We cannot afford to wait any longer. The time for action is now. We must move beyond reports and rhetoric to implement concrete measures that safeguard the mental well-being of Travellers. It is a matter of basic human rights and dignity.

we believe if this crisis were afflicting any other segment of society, the outcry would be deafening. Yet, the enduring silence in the face of Traveller suffering is both shameful and unacceptable.

As representatives of the Irish people, you have a moral obligation to address this crisis with urgency and determination. Failure to do so not only perpetuates injustice

but also undermines our commitment to human rights both at home and on the global stage.

Today the Traveller community call on you the elected representatives to ensure that Travellers receive the fairness, respect, and support they are entitled to as equal members of Irish society and to help bring an end to the inequality, exclusion and denial of human rights that Travellers have experienced on for generations.

Thank you.