

Social Welfare (Liable Relatives and Child Maintenance) Bill 2023
Committee Stage, 24 January 2024
Minister for Social Protection – Opening Remarks

Check against delivery

If the Chair will allow, I would like to make a few remarks to provide the Committee with a brief overview of the amendments I am bringing forward today.

The purpose of this Bill is:

- to change the means test for social welfare payments so that child maintenance payments will no longer be assessed as means;
- to remove the liable relative provisions from social welfare legislation; and
- to change the supports provided to people newly arriving from Ukraine who are living in designated accommodation centres. At Second Stage in the Dáil last week, I indicated my intention to bring forward Committee Stage amendments in this regard.

These amendments will remove the equivalence with Irish citizens in terms of accessing social welfare payments. This will align us more closely with other EU Member States.

The changes mean that newly arrived beneficiaries of Temporary Protection who are living in designated accommodation centres will receive a weekly payment of €38.80 per week.

Some other technical amendments are required as a consequence of the insertion of these new provisions.

Amendment numbers 1, 2, and 3 are technical, consequential amendments required to restructure the Bill into three Parts.

Part 1 will provide for the short title, construction, and commencement, as well as a definitions section.

Part 2 will include the provisions as set out in the Bill as initiated. That is, it will provide for the removal of the liable relative provisions from social welfare legislation, and it will change the means test such that child maintenance will no longer be assessed as means.

Part 3 will include the substantive provisions in relation to the supports for beneficiaries of temporary protection.

Amendment numbers 4 and 5 are the substantive amendments.

The purpose of these amendments is to provide that beneficiaries of Temporary Protection will not be eligible for the same social welfare payments as Irish citizens while they are resident in a designated accommodation centre.

Instead of a social welfare payment, such persons will be entitled to a weekly payment of €38.80 per week. This will be administered by the Department of Social Protection on behalf of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Exceptional Needs and Urgent Needs payments will continue to be available in circumstances where people meet the eligibility criteria for these payments. Child Benefit will also be available.

Amendment number 7 is a change to the long title which is also required as a result of amendment numbers 4 and 5.

I look forward to hearing from the Members of the Committee this morning.

Thank you.