

*(Supplementary Order Paper)*

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## DÁIL ÉIREANN

*Dé Máirt, 17 Eanáir, 2012*  
*Tuesday, 17th January, 2012*

2.00 p.m.

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### GNÓ COMHALTAÍ PRÍOBHÁIDEACHA PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

*Fógra i dtaobh leasú ar Thairiscint : Notice of Amendment to Motion*

39. “That Dáil Éireann:

- confirms that schools are legally obliged to provide guidance and that the provision of ‘appropriate’ guidance is a statutory requirement under the Education Act 1998;
- recognises that the budgetary decision to include guidance provision in the standard allocation is an effective increase in the pupil/teacher ratio at post-primary level;
- condemns the Government’s decision that will result in 700 schools losing up to 1,000 qualified guidance counsellors around the country, which will further result in guidance counselling being provided from within the standard teacher allocation;
- acknowledges that guidance counsellors provide a critical service to students by encouraging students to go on to third level, selecting which courses to study and also in offering advice and support relating to a range of personal issues;
- notes the ESRI’s report entitled ‘Improving Second-Level Education: Using Evidence for Policy Development’ which states that the removal of guidance counselling in schools will impact most on young students from disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of going on to third level;
- agrees that guidance counsellors are the only persons in a school setting professionally qualified to provide guidance counselling to students;
- condemns the position that post-primary schools are now faced with, where they must either cut an essential service to students or drop another subject leading to reduced subject choice;
- acknowledges that at the end of February and in June this year a significant number of teachers will retire from our schools, many of whom will be qualified guidance counsellors; and
- calls on the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn T.D., to:
  - explain the rationale behind his decision and the effect it will have, not only on the number of career guidance counsellors in post-primary schools, but also on subject choice in these schools;

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- publish any impact analysis carried out within his Department relating to this decision and the effect it will have on the career guidance profession and on vulnerable students;
- clarify if the section relating to the provision of ‘appropriate’ guidance in the Education Act 1998 still applies and what the Minister now deems to be ‘appropriate’ guidance following Budget 2012;
- ensure that all second level students have access to career guidance and counselling services following Budget 2012 and that schools must continue to provide a certain level of guidance counselling;
- ensure that only those teachers professionally qualified as guidance counsellors will be allowed to provide guidance counselling to students and that no other member of school management or teaching staff will be allowed to provide guidance to students;
- clarify who will provide career guidance and counselling provision to students in the event that a school chooses not to replace a school guidance counsellor that retires in February or June this year;
- clarify if he envisages any guidance posts being advertised in the coming academic year and what the effect will be on specific postgraduate qualifications in guidance; and
- reconsider this decision that will result in the obliteration of the guidance counselling profession and have a severe social impact on young vulnerable students, particularly those with mental health problems or from disadvantaged backgrounds.” — *Brendan Smith, John Browne, Dara Calleary, Niall Collins, Barry Cowen, Timmy Dooley, Seán Fleming, Billy Kelleher, Seamus Kirk, Michael P. Kitt, Micheál Martin, Michael Moynihan, Charlie McConalogue, Michael McGrath, John McGuinness, Éamon Ó Cuív, Willie O’Dea, Seán Ó Fearghail, Robert Troy.*

*Leasú:*

*Amendment:*

1. To delete all words after “Dáil Éireann” and substitute the following:

- “— acknowledges that:
- despite the severe economic crisis caused by the actions of previous Fianna Fáil-led Governments, and in the expectation that an additional 70,000 students will enter the education system over the next six years, the Government has ensured that the reduction in teacher numbers will be less than in other areas of the public sector over the coming years;
  - guidance provision will be managed in future by schools from within their standard staffing allocation so that schools will have discretion to balance guidance needs with the pressures to provide subject choice;
- notes that this change is in line with the Programme for Government commitment to give greater freedom and autonomy to school principals and boards of management, including greater freedom to allocate resources and manage staff;
  - recognises that all teachers, not just guidance counsellors, have a duty of care to their students and that school management and teachers have a long and proud tradition of working together to meet the needs of students, including any necessary supports for vulnerable or ‘at risk’ students;
  - acknowledges that, while changes are being made to the way in which guidance counsellors will be allocated in future, all post-primary schools will still be required

to provide guidance support for their students in accordance with the Education Act 1998;

— notes that guidance is a whole school activity; and

— welcomes:

— the Government's commitment in Budget 2012 for the filling of 300 assistant principal posts of responsibility in second-level schools and notes that this will ensure significant management supports, particularly for more appointments to the key role of year heads;

— the very constructive and positive work being done by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals with all post-primary schools to ensure they are aware of their continuing responsibility to provide guidance counselling services; and

— the intention of the Department of Education and Skills to issue a circular in the coming weeks in order to provide further clarification for schools on the changes to guidance counselling provision announced in the recent Budget.”  
— *An tAire Oideachais agus Scileanna.*