



(Via Email)

20th February 2023

Minister Heather Humphreys TD,
Minister for Social Protection, Rural & Community Development,
Áras Mhic Dhiarmada,
Store Street,
Dublin 1,
D01 WY03

RE: Improved access to the Free Travel Scheme for people with epilepsy.

Dear Minister,

I trust this finds you well. I am writing to you in my capacity as President of the Irish Epilepsy League, on behalf of our organisation, in support of Epilepsy Ireland's proposals to improve access to the Free Travel scheme for people with epilepsy.

The Irish Epilepsy League is the Irish chapter of the International League Against Epilepsy. Our membership comprises of healthcare professionals specialising in epilepsy, and members of the research and scientific community investigating epilepsy.

Through our continued partnership and strong working relationship with our colleagues in Epilepsy Ireland, we are aware that proposals have been put forward by Epilepsy Ireland which aim to address this longstanding issue that directly impacts on many of our patients across the country.

We are aware that your Department is currently finalising a report on this matter. However, we felt compelled to write to you to outline our strong support for the proposals which are being put forward.

Up to 70% of people living with epilepsy will go on to become seizure free if the right treatment for their individual condition is identified. For the other 30%, the condition can unfortunately have a considerable impact on the person's life.

Epilepsy is associated with unique accessibility issues given that a new diagnosis; a breakthrough seizure at any time; or continued seizures will mean that that a person will be unable to drive for a period of time or even permanently.

From a clinical perspective, it is difficult to tell someone that they have epilepsy – it is a condition that has many challenges associated with it and we know that from the point of diagnosis, a person will have to learn how to live with these challenges as part of their own journey with the condition.

For many people, being told that they cannot drive until they become one-year seizure free is often the biggest upheaval they face as a result of their diagnosis. While this is a necessary measure, it can have a huge impact on our patients in terms of social

ILAE's vision is a world in which no person's life is limited by epilepsy.
Irish Epilepsy League
249, Crumlin Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12, D12RW92



functioning; supporting family; pursuing education; continuing in employment; and indeed, financially.

We firmly believe that the proposals put forward by Epilepsy Ireland would mitigate this impact and greatly assist our patients on their journey with epilepsy.

Improved access to the Free Travel scheme is absolutely necessary for our patients – and will help bring us towards a vision we share with Epilepsy Ireland of a society where no person's life is limited by epilepsy. We would urge you and your Department to implement the proposals which are being put forward.

Should you wish to discuss further, or if you would like any further clinical insight on the condition, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your officials.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Peter Widdess-Walsh
Consultant Neurologist, Beaumont Hospital
President, Irish Epilepsy League

CC: Peter Murphy, CEO, Epilepsy Ireland.