



*(Via Email)*

26<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Minister Heather Humphreys TD,  
Minister for Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands  
Department of Social Protection,  
Áras Mhic Dhiarmada,  
Store Street,  
Dublin 1,  
D01 WY03.

**RE: Epilepsy Ireland Free Travel Proposals**

Dear Minister Humphreys,

I trust this finds you well. I am contacting you regarding your Department's assessment of Epilepsy Ireland's proposals to improve access to the Free Travel scheme for people with epilepsy.

We first met with you on this matter in January 2022 – following budget proposals we made in both 2020 and 2021. Following this meeting, your Department committed to undertaking exploratory work to assess our proposals. As part of this assessment process, your Department requested further information from Epilepsy Ireland regarding our proposals. This further information was sent in May 2022.

You will be aware that this matter continues to be regularly raised via parliamentary questions and through the Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection. You may also be aware that our colleagues in the Irish Epilepsy League (the Irish chapter of the International League against Epilepsy, whose membership is made up of clinicians, researchers and scientists working in epilepsy in Ireland) have written to you in support of our proposals, outlining their clinical expertise and the known impact that driving restrictions can have on their patients.

Towards the end of last year, it was confirmed that a report was being finalised by your Department on our proposals. We received confirmation from your officials that this was to be presented to you either before Christmas or early in 2023.

However, in subsequent PQ responses, it was stated that the report would be ready by the end of Quarter 1 2023.

While this further assessment continues, people with epilepsy continue to be impacted by this issue – which affects their ability to work, to maintain independence and remain socially active. We know that through your own close connection to a person impacted by this issue (as mentioned in our meeting, and subsequently in the Dáil) that you fully understand the issues involved and empathise with those affected.

We are now one month into Quarter 2 of 2023, and we note with interest that recent PQ responses have now omitted any reference to a deadline for this report on our proposals. It is over a year since there has been any formal communication or discussion on what we are proposing – proposals we feel are measured, cost-effective and are conscious of the ethos of your Department.



We sincerely hope that given the time that has gone into the preparation of the report by your Department, that it will contain recommendations to implement some or all of our proposals to improve access to the Free Travel scheme for people with epilepsy.

We are now writing to you to seek an urgent update regarding your and your Department's position on our proposals. We are conscious that should the Department's report contain recommendations to provide greater supports requiring budgetary commitments, now is the time that this needs to be acted on in preparation for Budget 2024.

We would very much appreciate if you could revert to us at your earliest convenience regarding this longstanding matter. We would be more than willing to meet with you to discuss the matter further. We believe this report needs to be finalised and acted upon without any further delay.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Murphy".

Peter Murphy  
CEO, Epilepsy Ireland

CC:

Dr. Peter Widdess-Walsh, President, Irish Epilepsy League