

ECHONEWS

Disability Bill is a 'farce' says trainer

PEOPLE with disabilities will never be seen as equal in Irish society — if the current proposed disability bill is enforced.

That's according to Frances Finucane-Butler from Blackrock who works as a disability trainer at University College Cork and with several European organisations which support the rights of people with disabilities.

According to the disability campaigner, the Government refuses to recognise the rights of people with disabilities.

"As an Irish citizen with a physical disability, I feel very angry and disappointed that the current draft of the bill is such a farce. I cannot believe that our Government is trying to pass such a discriminating document," she said.

According to the Blackrock woman, the Government does not understand what it is like to live with a disability.

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"Numerous and lengthy consultations have taken place with disability groups all over Ireland since the last draft of the bill was rejected. If the proposed bill in its current form becomes legislation, people with disabilities will be told in no uncertain terms that we are not and never will be seen as equal in Irish society."

She said the purpose of the legislation should be to provide enforceable rights and duties on public bodies to promote equality and the active participation of people with disabilities.

"This bill will only represent a few crumbs thrown from the political table and will not support the rights of people with disabilities," she said.

However, Ms Finucane-Butler added if the Government were to put the correct financial

backing in support of rights-based disability legislation, it would ensure that anyone with a disability would be able to live their lives as equal citizens in Irish society.

"I personally believe that the Government is afraid to face up to the reality of disability.

"What they must become aware of is that disability does not concern itself with age, status, gender, sexuality, colour or religious background.

"It can happen to anyone at any time in their life. Disability issues are not going to fade away into the background," she said.

The Government's proposed Disability Bill was up for discussion in the Dáil yesterday.

The legislation was drawn up following years of negotiations with groups working with the disabled. However, many of these groups have expressed dissatisfaction with the bill, particularly its failure to introduce legally enforceable rights for the disabled.



Frances Finucane-Butler, Disability Equality Trainer, has slammed the Disability Bill as a 'farce'.