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## Statement by Turn Off the Red Light

**Historic day as the “most important legislation since the formation of the State” is passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas and will shortly become law**



Turn Off the Red Light partners outside the Oireachtas ahead of today's final Seanad debate

Today a historic precedent was set when the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill, which includes laws to criminalise the purchase of sex and ensure vulnerable women, children and men in prostitution can access support, passed its final hurdle in Seanad Éireann and will now be part of the Irish Statute Book.

The 70+ partners of Turn Off the Red Light, which have been tirelessly campaigning in support of this crucial legislation are united in their welcome for the new legislation, which will better protect vulnerable women, children and men who are being sexually exploited.

**Denise Charlton, Chair of Turn Off the Red Light**, said: “From the very beginning this Bill has been about protecting and supporting those most vulnerable to sexual exploitation, violence and abuse. It focuses on the perpetrators of sexual crime – the pimps and traffickers who enable abuse and exploitation to continue, and who benefit from it financially.

“We commend the Tánaiste, Minister Frances Fitzgerald, for championing this Bill as it progressed through the Oireachtas. By supporting it, the Irish Government is making a clear statement that it will stand up for the most vulnerable in our society.

“The inclusion of a review period in this legislation affirms the Government's commitment to making sure the legislation has a real impact for those it seeks to support. We look forward to working with the Government in the coming months to ensure this happens.”

**Mia de Faoite, survivor activist**, said, “Prostitution is somewhere rape and murder thrive. This law challenges those who pay for sex to face the consequences of their actions - the potential impact of their actions on their lives, the lives of their loved ones and, crucially, on the life of the person they pay for sex. It brings what they do in the dark into who they are in the day.

“It is naïve in the extreme to think regulation can be the answer – all that would do is turn every pimp into a legitimate businessman. Instead, by targeting buyers as this Bill does, you will tackle this form of sexual violence by discouraging men from paying for sex, while supporting those exploited through prostitution to exit and rebuild their lives.”

**Brian Killoran, CEO of the Immigrant Council of Ireland**, a lead partner in Turn Off the Red Light, said, “The Immigrant Council has supported many victims of trafficking – the vast majority of whom have been sexually exploited. Both logic and the evidence are clear: reduce demand and supply diminishes. This legislation will seek to do just that and cut off the hand which feeds pimps and traffickers.

“In Sweden, where similar legislation has been in force since 1999, there has been a significant reduction in trafficking and prostitution with a halt in the recruitment of new women. Sweden is no longer an attractive destination for traffickers, and the number of men purchasing sexual services has fallen significantly – the law clearly works as a deterrent.”

**Denise Charlton** concluded, “Today Ireland joins the international trend to target those who perpetuate abuse. We are standing side by side with survivors of abuse, and recognising the harm and inequality inherent to the sex trade. This is a significant step towards a more equal Ireland for all.”

## **ENDS**

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