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Standing for the truth

The Bible says lawmakers have a duty to restrain evil and promote good. It's a difficult job.

There are many who take the easy route of backing secular liberal ideologies. Sadly, few stand up for what is right. We should pray for our politicians – both for the good of our fellow citizens and for the freedom to live out and share the Gospel (1 Tim. 2:2).

In recent years, Ireland has seen rapid and radical change. The significance of marriage and the family, the reality of biological sex, and the sanctity of human life

have all been attacked.

Current proposals on SPHE, assisted suicide, hate crime, 'conversion therapy', abortion censorship zones and legalising drugs seek to move society even further away from God's good design set out in his Word.

But the wonderful truths revealed in the Bible do not change and we must be ready to promote and defend them.

We cannot remain silent. If we do, we embolden those opposed to a biblical worldview to go even further.

Parents' rights and marriage absent from SPHE curriculum

The Christian Institute has called for significant improvements to be made to the draft SPHE curriculum.

It comes in a written response to the recent National Council for Curriculum and Assessment consultation.

Poor recognition of parental rights, limited protection for free speech, and the absence of any reference to marriage were highlighted as the three major problems to address.

Ciarán Kelly, the Institute's Deputy Director, said: "Parents



and teachers of all faiths and none are concerned at some of the language that has been used.

"The Constitution and the European Convention recognise the primacy of parents in the education of their children. Sadly, no such status is afforded to

them by this drafting, which doesn't even see fit to highlight the need to consult parents set out in education law."

Mr Kelly noted that the draft document "studiously avoids all mention of marriage", whilst having "plenty to say in support of contested gender

ideology".

The Institute's submission also recommends including a clear commitment to free speech for students who do not accept transgender ideology, or who cannot affirm sexual lifestyles that run contrary to their religious beliefs.

Doctors plead: 'Don't make us the harbingers of death'

The largest body of doctors in Ireland has urged the Oireachtas not to legalise assisted suicide.

In evidence presented to the Joint Committee on Assisted Dying in October, the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland restated its complete opposition to the practice. The College has over 11,000 members.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Dr Feargal Twomey, a consultant in palliative medicine, called assisted suicide "contrary to best medical practice" and



highlighted the need for "more and better" end-of-life care.

In November, representatives from the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland similarly urged parliamentarians to pursue excellence in end-of-life care rather than legalise assisted suicide.

Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Siobhán McHale called for deficiencies in care to be addressed, rather than "ending the lives of terminally ill people as a way to avoid these challenges".

Elma Walsh's teenage son benefitted from palliative care until his death from cancer in 2013. She told

the Committee that "from the time Donal was diagnosed terminal, he lived with dying with the help of his palliative care team".

In light of his experience, she warned that the introduction of assisted suicide risked turning palliative care doctors into "death givers".

Ireland being pushed towards failed drug decriminalisation approach

Ireland's Citizens' Assembly on Drug Use has called for wholesale liberalisation of laws on the possession of illegal drugs.



The Assembly avoided backing cannabis legalisation by just one vote but agreed to propose a "comprehensive health-led response to possession of drugs for personal use" to the Oireachtas and Government.

If implemented, it would "minimise, or potentially completely remove, the possibility of criminal conviction and prison sentences" for possession.

The Assembly said its recommendation mirrored the practice in Portugal, which decriminalised drugs in 2001.

But columnist Catherine Conlon warned that the approach there is 'showing its flaws'.

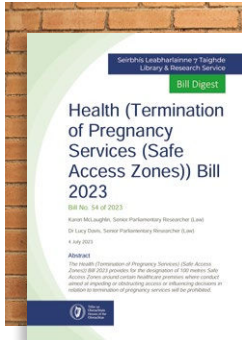
Writing in the Irish Independent, she described how "police in Porto are blaming a spike in the number of people who use drugs for a rise in crime in the city".

Citing a Washington Post report, she added that drug paraphernalia is 'littering pavements outside primary schools', but "existing laws limit the ability to intervene".

Seanad to scrutinise 'regressive' abortion censorship zones Bill

TDs have backed a censorship zones Bill in the Dáil, with 117 voting in favour and 10 against. It will now progress to the Seanad.

The Health (Termination of Pregnancy Services) (Safe Access Zones) Bill 2023 will create censorship zones around facilities that provide or administer abortions. It has been branded a "regressive and



across Northern Ireland in September, and within a week, two pro-lifers were arrested.

It is understood the pair had been praying outside the Craigavon Area Hospital every week since regulations permitting abortion were introduced in Northern Ireland in March 2020.

draconian piece of legislation".

A similar Bill has been launched in Scotland, which would make it illegal

to 'influence' the decision of a woman getting an abortion, or cause her 'harassment, alarm or distress'. Its vague wording

is likely to capture prayer, and rule-breakers can face an unlimited fine.

Censorship zones were introduced

Mid-teens pupils admit to regularly smoking cannabis

One in six pupils aged 15 and 16 have admitted to smoking cannabis.

Analysis of the 2019 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs found that Ireland ranked 12th out of 25 European countries for the largest proportion of cannabis users in that age range.

Of the 300 respondents who answered questions on drug use, over twelve percent admitted to using cannabis more than 40 times in a year. Eleven per cent claimed it was not unusual to smoke it before midday.



'Being a Christian wasn't welcome in the SNP'

A Scottish MP has told the BBC that she left the SNP after former colleagues opposed her selection because of her Christian views. She said she felt pressured to vote contrary to her beliefs.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour, Dr Lisa Cameron shared how she experienced similar issues to fellow Free Church of Scotland member Kate

Forbes MSP. During the 2023 SNP leadership contest, Forbes was attacked for upholding biblical sexual ethics.

Dr Cameron voted against imposing a liberal abortion regime on Northern Ireland and legalising assisted suicide in England and Wales.

She said "being a Christian was something that was not welcome in the SNP". Feeling unable to continue in the party, Dr Cameron has joined the Conservatives.



← Lisa Cameron MP



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CI warns UK Govt against 'conversion therapy' law



The Christian Institute has reminded the UK Government that it is ready to take legal action if a 'conversion therapy' law is brought in that impacts the ordinary work of churches.

Although a draft Bill was not announced in the King's Speech, ministers say they remain committed to bringing forward plans for a new law.

LGBT activists have been calling for a broad law which covers preaching, prayer, pastoral conversations and even parenting. But leading

human rights lawyers say this would 'likely violate' Convention rights on free speech, religious freedom and family life.

In Ireland, Equalities Minister Roderic O'Gorman says a new law is "a priority". However, polling for The Christian Institute found his view is not shared by 94 per cent of voters.

Download our new briefing: the.ci/goldstandard



'Biological sex is common sense' says PM Sunak in trans pushback

The British Prime Minister has emphasised that biological sex is simply "common sense" as he pledged to stop people being "bullied into believing that people can be any sex they want".

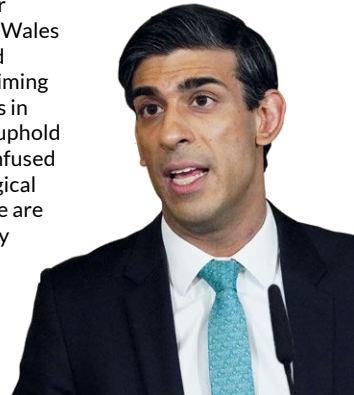
Rishi Sunak spoke out in October after the health service announced that men who claim to be women will no

longer be admitted to female-only wards. Mr Sunak said patients should know when "hospitals are talking about men or women".

The equality watchdog for England and Wales has also axed guidance claiming that teachers in Britain who uphold a gender-confused pupil's biological sex and name are automatically

breaking the law.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission ordered schools to provide single-sex toilets on the basis of biological sex.



biological sex is "common sense"

McEntee denies hate crime law will include 'misgendering'

People who refer to a gender-confused person's biological sex will not be prosecuted under Ireland's proposed hate crime law, Helen McEntee has pledged.

The Justice Minister claimed that the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022 "is not about criminalising people who insult others or might misgender another person".

She said so-called misgendering did not constitute a "deliberate intent to spread

hatred against another person".

But during the passage of the Bill through the Dáil in April, Paul Murphy TD said it was in danger of criminalising someone in possession of supposedly 'hateful material', even if it remained private and harmed nobody.

He asked: "How can we hold people responsible for actions that they have not taken? That goes against the main thrust of our criminal law, which relates to actual crimes that take place, not bad thoughts that



people have, that they write down."

During a subsequent Seanad debate, Senators also expressed fears that people would rather remain silent on 'controversial' issues than run the risk of prosecution.

McEntee has

previously claimed the vast majority of people want new hate crime laws, despite 73 per cent of respondents to the Government's own public consultation opposing the plans.

She expects the new law to be enacted within weeks.

New research exposes extent of national gambling "emergency"

Almost a million people in Ireland show some evidence of problem gambling, according to new research.

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) estimates that 3.3 per cent of the resident adult population

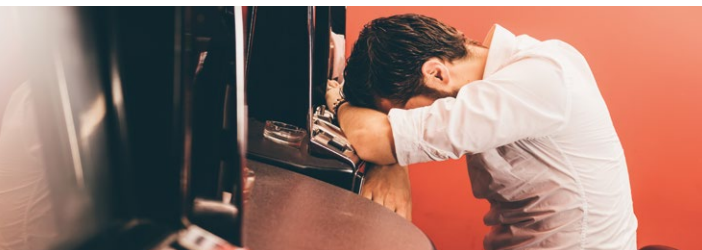
are problem gamblers. A further 22.1 per cent suffer from at least "one negative experience or behaviour" associated with gambling.

The ESRI stated that the percentage of problem gamblers - equating to 1 in 30

adults, or 130,000 people - "is more than ten times higher than previous estimates".

Professor Colin O'Gara, Consultant Psychiatrist and Head of Addiction Services at St John of God Hospital in Blackrock, described the situation as an "emergency". He expressed his hope that the findings would "make people sit up and listen".

According to statistics published by the Institute of Public Health and the Tobacco Free Research Institute in September, 23 per cent of 16-year-olds in Ireland have gambled for money.



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Candidates will be graduates, highly accurate, numerate and with good communication skills.

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the Republic of Ireland is required. Full and part-time applications will be considered.

Candidates for the posts will be Evangelical Christians who are highly motivated to apply biblical principles to the family, education, the world of work and public policy.

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 **0044 191 281 5664**

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Registered office: The Christian Institute, Wilberforce House, 4 Park Road, Gosforth Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8DG, UK
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