



Urgent letter regarding Leaving Certificate and Traveller and Roma Students. May 8, 2020

**To: Joe McHugh, T.D.,
Minister for Education and Science**

**From: The National Traveller Women's Forum, and
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre**

We write to urge you and your officials in Department of Education and Science to ensure that the cancellation of the Leaving Certificate and associated measures to replace it do not differentially disadvantage Traveller and Roma students.

As you know and as we wrote to you of at the start of the crisis, Traveller participation in and outcomes from our education system at all levels is a matter of extreme and urgent concern which has been highlighted by Traveller organisations and in a number of recent Oireachtas reports

Reports now from Traveller groups around the country indicate clearly that Traveller students at all levels face considerable difficulties with the emergency home schooling and remote study arrangements necessitated by the COVID-19 crisis with consequences for their preparations and ongoing assessments.

Traveller transitions to and within second level education and Traveller progression to Higher Education already recognised, for instance in the National Equity of Access to Higher Education Plan, are now a matter of major concern for Traveller groups. Targeted action is required at school and Higher Education Institution levels to ensure that the new measures address rather than further exasperate these. Travellers transitioning to Higher Education will require further and ongoing supports.

We are concerned also that the essential focus on progression in today's discussion may mask the need also for certification of second level participation in its own right by students

including Travellers.

We urge you and your officials to recognise and articulate your understanding of the different circumstances including those which can pertain for marginalised and minority students including Travellers – circumstances within which students are attempting to deal with today's announcements.

We are also conscious of reports from elsewhere regarding unconscious bias in outcomes for minority and marginalised students, and urge you to equality-proof any measures taken by the Department of Education and Skills.

Direct engagement of your Department with Traveller organisations and Traveller students and their parents on this matter is extremely important and urgent. We are immediately available to talk with you or your officials on these now very urgent matters, and will continue to work with your officials on spaces to discuss and make agendas for addressing them.

Finally our thanks to you and to your officials for the considerations given to date to Travellers and Roma in the Guidance and advice, issued from the Department of Education and Science to schools and other stakeholders since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis.

Yours sincerely

Anastasia Crickley, Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre

Martin Collins, Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre

Maria Joyce, National Traveller Women's Forum

Cathryn Mannion, National Traveller Women's Forum