

Michael Potter
Clerk to the Committee for the Executive Office
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Email 

4 March 2022

Dear Michael

FAIR EMPLOYMENT (SCHOOL TEACHERS) BILL

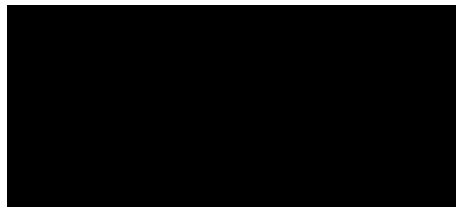
Thank you for your letter of 31 January 2022, in which you advise that the Committee for the Executive Office was seeking written evidence on the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill and had agreed to invite the Executive Office to provide a view on the Bill.

The Minister is committed to delivering equality for all school sectors, and this includes consideration of an end to the Article 71 Exception of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 (FETO).

Any amendment to the Article 71 exception impacts on all education sectors – maintained, controlled, integrated, Irish medium and voluntary grammar. I understand that Chris Lyttle MLA has written to the Executive Office Committee asking it to complete its Committee Stage as soon as possible and to write to the Speaker requesting that the Bill then moves to the Consideration Stage, Further Consideration Stage and Final Stage, all to be held on the final week of the sitting of this session of the Assembly (w/c 21 March). This would enable the Bill to pass into law.

Department of Education officials have consulted with employing authorities and sectoral bodies who make up Management Side of the Education sector. They agree with the need to review the exemption but this must allow full consideration of both the process and the arrangements required following its removal. A number of the oral evidence sessions to the Committee made reference to potential amendments that might be required to the proposed Bill. To that end it is imperative that full and transparent consultation takes place, particularly across the full breadth of the education sector.

The Minister is, therefore, not supportive of the proposed process to repeal the exemption. This work must be completed in a measured and fully informed manner, which will not be possible within the current mandate.



PETER BURNS

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer