

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER

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Dear Christine

DEFAMATION BILL

Thank you for your letter of 1 October asking for the Department's comments on the Defamation Bill.

Having considered the contents of the Bill, the only provision that would impact on this Department is clause 11, which would, in defamation proceedings, remove the presumption in favour of a jury trial, and replace it with a presumption against a jury trial (but with the option for a court to order one).

This clause, if enacted, would have some operational implications for the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS), for example, in relation to the numbers required to be called for jury service. We would also want the judiciary to be informed in a timely way of any change to the substantive law. It would, therefore, be important for NICTS to be kept informed by the Department of Finance about plans for commencement of the Bill, if passed.



**CLAIRE McCORMICK
DALO**