

Response ID ANON-5N3N-6G9M-7

Submitted to School Uniforms (Trousers) Bill
Submitted on 2026-08-20 11:18:05

Introduction

1 Please confirm that you have read the Privacy Notice for Northern Ireland Assembly Committees by clicking the button below.

Yes, I have read the Privacy Notice.:

Yes

2 Do you consent to your submission being published on the Committee's website and included in the Committee's report?

Yes. Publish in full.

3 What is your name?

Name:

[REDACTED]

4 What is your email address?

Email:

[REDACTED]

5 Are you responding as:

Another organisation - please provide details.

Please provide further details here, if relevant.:

The Women's Regional Consortium

6 What is your gender?

Female

Purpose of the Bill

7 Do you agree with the purpose of the Bill?

Yes

Do you have any further comments?:

It is incredulous that girls do not have the right to wear trousers in school. Women and girls wear trousers in all sorts of settings and indeed it has been a workplace norm for many decades. Trousers are an acceptable form of dress for women and most organisations where uniforms are required have changed their dress codes accordingly. Trousers are quite often cheaper, more comfortable and more practical and there is no rational argument as to why girls should not be allowed to wear trousers at school.

8 Do you foresee any unintended consequences of the Bill?

No

If you have answered 'yes', please provide details:

Clauses of the Bill

Clause 1

9 Do you think Clause 1 will have the effects that are anticipated?

I believe Clause 1 will have all the anticipated effects.

If you have answered that Clause 1 will only have some of the anticipated effects, or won't have the anticipated effects, please provide details.:

Clause 2

10 It is appropriate for the DE to also publish its guidelines on school uniforms.

Strongly agree

Do you have any further comments? :

Clause 3

11 Do you have any comments on this Clause?

No

If you have answered 'yes', please provide details.:

Financial effects of the Bill

12 The financial effects of the Bill will be minimal. (See Paragraphs 19 and 20 of the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.)

Strongly agree

Do you have any further comments? :

Additional Comments and Observations

13 Additional comments and observations

Comment Box :

International human rights standards underscore the principle of non-discrimination. Prohibiting girls from wearing trousers in school is a discriminatory practice that violates the principles of gender equality and the rights of women and girls. A number of international human rights standards apply in support of the right of girls to wear trousers in school including:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW contains a number of articles which support the right to wear trousers in school:
 - o Article 1 Definition of Discrimination - defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex that hinders the recognition of women's rights. This would include anything that restricts clothing choices based on gender which can be viewed as a form of gender-based discrimination.
 - o Article 2 Measures – obligates states to eliminate discrimination and take appropriate steps to ensure equality in all areas including in education.
 - o Article 5 Stereotypes – CEDAW calls for the modification of social and cultural patterns that perpetuate discrimination. Enforcing traditional gender norms around clothing can perpetuate harmful stereotypes.
 - o Article 10 Education - CEDAW emphasises the need for equal access to education and the importance of removing obstacles to educational attainment for girls. Enforcing uniform policy that limits the clothing choices of girls, including prohibiting trousers, may hinder their comfort and participation in educational environments.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Article 2 includes the right of children to be free from discrimination and Article 12 includes the right of children to express themselves. Restricting the ability of girls to wear trousers in school can be seen as a breach of their right to express themselves and their gender identity.
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Article 19 ensures the right to freedom of expression and Article 26 prohibits discrimination on various grounds including sex. The right to wear trousers in school should be protected as it can be viewed as an expression of identity.
- European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The ECHR is incorporated into domestic law through the Human Rights Act 1998. Article 8 guarantees the right to respect for private and family life and Protocol No. 12 prohibits discrimination on any ground including sex. These rights may be violated by dress codes that enforce gender-specific clothing.