

Title: Underfunding of the Health Service 2024

That Dáil Éireann:

Notes:

- It is widely accepted that the Government have chosen to underfund the health service in Budget 2024
- Comments made by the Minister for Health, recorded in the Irish Times on Thursday, 12 October 2023, stating: "it is entirely likely that a supplementary budget will be required next year,"
- Comments made by the Chief Executive Officer of the Health Service Executive to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health on 27 September 2023, stating that there will likely be a health service income and expenditure deficit of "somewhere in the region of about €1.4 billion or €1.5 billion" in 2023,
- Comments made by the Secretary General of the Department of Health to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health on 27 September 2023, stating that: "there has definitely been underfunding of ELS, absolutely. That is a problem,"

Further notes that:

- The Government have allocated only €708 million for existing levels of service funding in 2024 for the Health Service, which is less than half of the shortfall identified for 2023 before even covering other cost pressures in 2024 such as carryover, demographics, and pay;
- The Government have not allocated additional capital funding to the Health Service Executive to deliver the promised and needed 1,500 acute inpatient hospital beds which are not included in the National Development Plan funding; and
- The New Children's Hospital will require a significant additional allocation of funding due to the Government's mismanagement of the project, which will add further cost pressures on the Health Service Executive's budget; and

Condemns the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste, the Leader of the Green Party, and the Government as a whole for:

- Their reckless decision to underfund the Health Service in Budget 2024;
- Embedding an overreliance on outsourcing, agency staffing, management consultancy, and overtime which has increased costs, hollowed out the health service, and burned out the workforce;
- Their failure to reform the healthcare system and deliver a single integrated financial management system in the Health Service Executive, to invest in digital transformation and to put in place more effective management of waiting lists;

- Ignoring warnings from the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health that the budget for 2023 and 2024 does not cover the true cost of running the Health Service Executive;
- Ignoring warnings from healthcare trade unions and patient advocacy organisations of the potentially catastrophic consequences of dramatically underfunding the Health Service Executive for workers and patients; and
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Considers that the Government's budgetary decisions for 2024:

- will have a severe impact on frontline services, clinical programmes, national strategies, access to new medicines, tackling waiting lists, and dealing with manifold crises across Emergency Departments, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, and Children's Disability Services;
- has already led to cuts in frontline services with 7,000 unfunded approved posts in the Health Service Executive being cut, and a recruitment freeze being put in place on vital frontline health service roles such as non-training scheme doctors, healthcare assistants, and home help workers;
- will have serious consequences for the Health Service Executive's ability to meet the already weak targets set out in the Minister for Health's Waiting List Action Plan, which is behind profile and unlikely to hit targets by year-end for a second year in a row; and
- will result in hospital managers and doctors making tough decisions on what services to provide, what services to cut, and which patients will not receive the care they need; and

Calls on the Government to

- Immediately increase the funding allocation for the Department of Health for 2024 to:
  - adequately cover existing levels of services and cost pressures such as inflation, demographic changes, demand increases, and pay increases; and
  - provide for new developments funding to advance vital projects across hospital bed capacity, community care reform, and taking further steps towards universal healthcare and reducing the cost of healthcare such as raising the medical card threshold and reducing the drugs payment scheme threshold; and
- Urgently bring forward a supplementary budget for 2023 to reverse the recruitment freeze on essential frontline posts as the Health Service Executive faces into an extremely tough winter without adequate resources to deliver the quality and quantity of care to avoid thousands of patients languishing on trolleys and exposed to unnecessary risk of delayed care and hospital-acquired infections; and

- Put in place a time-bound plan for ending the Health Service Executive's reliance on expensive outsourcing, agency staffing, management consultancy, and private healthcare.

David Cullinane, Chris Andrews, John Brady, Martin Browne, Pat Buckley, Matt Carthy, Sorca Clarke, Rose Conway Walsh, Réada Cronin, Seán Crowe, David Cullinane, Pa Daly, Pearse Doherty, Paul Donnelly, Dessie Ellis, Mairéad Farrell, Kathleen Funchion, Thomas Gould, Johnny Guirke, Martin Kenny, Claire Kerrane, Pádraig Mac Lochlainn, Mary Lou McDonald, Denise Mitchell, Imelda Munster, Johnny Mythen, Eoin Ó Broin, Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire, Ruairi Ó Murchú, Darren O'Rourke, Aengus Ó Snodaigh, Louise O'Reilly, Maurice Quinlivan, Patricia Ryan, Brian Stanley, Pauline Tully, Mark Ward.