

PMB re Health Services in the Mid-West

That Dáil Éireann:

Condemns the abandonment of patients in Clare, Limerick, and Tipperary following the wholesale cancellation of scheduled and planned care for several weeks at University Hospital Limerick (UHL) in August 2024;

Notes the publication of the report of the independent investigation by Mr Justice Frank Clarke into the care of Ms Aoife Johnston and her tragic, premature passing in 2022;

Acknowledges that a review of emergency and urgent care services in the Midwest region is underway;

Recalls that:

- the requisite capacity to replace emergency departments (ED) at Ennis and Nenagh was never delivered at UHL, and that the closure of those EDs left UHL as a single point of failure with no backup in the region;
- the closure of the Ennis and Nenagh EDs was done without the agreement of local GPs who were expected to deliver urgent care in the absence of the EDs;
- commitments given by successive Governments to create a centre of excellence in emergency care at UHL have never been followed through; and
- UHL ED has invariably been described by clinicians, patients, families, and advocates as “unsafe,” “akin to a warzone,” “overcrowded,” and “a crisis situation”;
- Further notes that:
- Hospital bed capacity is low in the Mid-West, at an estimated 2 acute inpatient beds per 1,000 population in comparison to a statewide average of 2.2, a 9% shortfall compared to other regions;
- Only 118 additional beds have been delivered at University Hospital Limerick since 2020, despite a need for at least 250 beds to close the known deficit which has existed since the closure of emergency departments in Ennis and Nenagh a decade-and-a-half ago;
- Inpatient waiting lists in the Mid West have risen from 4,951 to 5,348 from August 2023 to August 2024, and the percentage of patients waiting longer than the Sláintecare target wait time has risen from 64% to 69%, with 78% of children over the target wait;
- More than 21,000 patients were admitted to UHL without a proper bed across 2023, making UHL the most overcrowded hospital in the State and 70% worse than the second-place hospital, according to the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation;
- There are 5 EDs in the HSE Dublin and South East Region, which serves a population of c. 970,000, in comparison to just 1 ED in the HSE Mid West Region, which serves a population of c. 410,000 people;
- Resolves that additional bed capacity for UHL must be fast-tracked and that additional emergency and urgent care capacity is needed across the region; and
- Calls on Government to:
- Ensure that acute healthcare delivery in the Mid West region is safe, population-based, and clinically underpinned
- Commit to a second model 3 hospital with an emergency department for the Midwest region;
- Fast track additional bed capacity for UHL to urgently bring the region’s acute bed capacity in line with other regions;

- Develop protected inpatient elective capacity for the Mid West region to separate scheduled and unscheduled care;
- Develop a new model of urgent and out-of-hours care including a public GP contract, enhanced pharmacy services, and 24/7 urgent care at Ennis, Nenagh, and St John's hospitals;
- Invest in home support and local community healthcare services to improve discharge rates and reduce pressure on UHL;
- Fund the National Ambulance Service workforce plan to support rapid access to emergency care;
- Legislate to mandate safe staffing levels in every hospital and expedite the Patient Safety (Licencing) Bill 2024.

David Cullinane, Chris Andrews, John Brady, Martin Browne, Pat Buckley, Matt Carthy, Sorca Clarke, Rose Conway Walsh, Réada Cronin, Seán Crowe, 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, Louise O'Reilly, Darren O'Rourke, Aengus Ó Snodaigh, Maurice Quinlivan, Patricia Ryan, Brian Stanley, Pauline Tully, Mark Ward.