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**&ldquo;The Government is still exposing vulnerable people to possible abuse and there is an urgent need for binding codes of conduct to protect those at risk&rdquo; says Independent Euro candidate and former MEP Patricia McKenna.**

She has accused the Government of paying lip service to the issue of abuse: &ldquo;despite the pious words of concern the Government is still exposing vulnerable people to possible abuse and refusing to provide adequate protection and safeguards.&rdquo;

McKenna pointed out that on the 11th May HIQA the Health Information and Quality Authority published National Quality Standards for Residential Services for People with Disabilities but stated that they were non-statutory. This means that these much-needed standards are nothing more than a voluntary code of conduct and will not be accompanied by any regulation or inspection.

&ldquo;In light of last week&rsquo;s scandalous revelations into child abuse it is ludicrous that any institution would be allowed to opt into or out of standards designed to protect basic human rights.&rdquo; States McKenna, she continued by saying that, &ldquo;it is beyond belief, especially after the litany of horrors exposed last week, that any government would suggest people can &lsquo;volunteer&rsquo; to respect human rights and dignity &ndash; furthermore if they don&rsquo;t volunteer nothing will be done to ensure that abuse does not take place.&rdquo;

John Moloney, T.D., Minister of State with special responsibility for Equality, Disability and Mental Health said &ldquo;given the current fiscal situation, it was not proposed to move to full statutory implementation of the standards, including regulation and inspection, at this time&rdquo;.

McKenna responded by saying that &ldquo;it appears that our Government has learned nothing from the recent findings of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse and despite the appalling crimes of the past it is still exposing some of the most vulnerable sectors of Irish society to possible abuse at this very moment.

The Government&rsquo;s use of the current economic situation as an excuse not to act is unforgivable. The recent revelations have shown that there can be no justification, economic or otherwise, for failing to protect our citizens against abuse. The Government must make these standards legally binding and put in place rigorous inspection procedures to ensure they are complied with.&rdquo;

=== Ends ===

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