**10th March 2021**

Tánaiste Leo Varadkar,
Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Dear Tánaiste,

We hope you and your family are keeping well in these strange and difficult times.

We are writing you in your capacity of Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment on behalf of the Four Day Week Ireland (4DWI) campaign.

We are a campaign coalition which comprises businesspeople, trade unionists, environmentalists, academics and women’s rights advocates.

Since our launch in September 2019, we have been making the case for a gradual, steady and managed transition to a shorter working week in all sectors of the economy.

We have started a public conversation in Ireland on the case for reduced working hours. Our medium term objective is for the four-day week to become the new ‘default’ work arrangement across the economy, with no loss of pay.

We believe that this is not only achievable but essential as a response to technological change – to futureproof our economy, and to share the benefits with workers.

There is a growing body of international evidence and academic research which shows that a four-day week can be good for business, as well as for workers. Many companies who have trialled or introduced the four-day week report happier, more focused employees, and crucially higher productivity.

Studies also show that a four-day week can significantly reduce carbon emissions, and make a huge contribution to our defining battle against climate change.

In September 2020, we published the first ever public opinion poll in Ireland on the four-day working week. This revealed a very enthusiastic response to the prospect of a four-day week (defined as “same job, same goals, same salary but over four days rather than five”).

Just over three-quarters (77%) of those surveyed said they are supportive of the Government exploring the potential introduction of a four-day week. Among employers who responded, more than two out of three (67%) supported this. Almost half of Irish employers (46%) also said that they see trialling a four day week in their own workplace setting as being “feasible”.

We held a very successful cross-party briefing event in September to discuss these results, where we had a productive engagement with representatives from all major political parties in the State.

Following on from this, the Oireachtas committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment have included a stakeholder consultation and a sectoral feasibility study on the four-day working week on their work programme for this year.

In light of the changing world of work accelerated by the pandemic, and international developments around corporate taxation, we need a new industrial strategy and a new FDI model to attract inward investment.

Ireland can be a global leader in championing the shift to a shorter working week. We believe that embracing a four-day week can give Ireland a significant competitive advantage in recruiting international talent.

As part of the next phase of the campaign, the 4DWI campaign will be launching a coordinated international pilot as part of ‘4 Day Week Global’. We intend to run a 6-month ‘test pilot’ from September 2021 with a relatively small number of companies, in advance of the full rollout of the coordinated 6-month pilot programme in January 2022.

To support this, we have developed a package of tangible supports for businesses who agree to participate in the pilot. This includes:

* Research (through a partnership with University College Dublin and Boston College, we will conduct academic analysis of business productivity and employee wellbeing metrics before and during the trial, and produce a post-trial impact assessment)
* Training (developed by businesses who have successfully introduced the four-day week)
* Coaching and Mentoring (from international four-day week business leaders)
* Networking and Collaboration (with other companies taking part in the coordinated global pilot)
* Accreditation (promotion of the businesses as a four-day week pilot employer)

We would like to engage with you to discuss the possibility of the Irish Government supporting the pilot programme, by:
- Co-sponsoring the pilot research
- Supporting private businesses who commit to participating in the pilot (in line with measures recently announced by the Spanish government)
- Committing to targeted pilots in the public service (in departments/sections of the local authority sector and the civil service).

Since becoming Minister, you have demonstrated a clear commitment to engage with measures to enhance work-life balance and build a better future of work for all, including on remote working, the right to disconnect, and statutory sick pay.

We see the four-day week as a pivotal part of the development of that policy framework.

We would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss the campaign, our research, and our plans for the upcoming pilot programme.

Yours faithfully,

Joe O’Connor, Director of Campaigning, Fórsa Trade Union
Margaret Cox, Director, ICE Group
Paul McNulty, CEO, 3D Issue
Orla O’Connor, Director, National Women’s Council
Oisín Coghlan, Director, Friends of the Earth Ireland
Aileen O’Carroll, Policy Manager, Digital Repository of Ireland
Andrew Barnes, Founder, Perpetual Guardian
Charlotte Lockhart, CEO, 4 Day Week Global