

12th December 2024

Dear Party Leader,

RE: Co-options - Consider advocating for the selection of women - Gender Quotas Alliance

Congratulations on your recent election as TD. We wish you every success in your new role.

I am writing on behalf of the Gender Quotas Alliance, a group of NGOs and academics advocating for the introduction of legislative gender quotas for local elections. Despite a record number of women standing for the June local elections, only one additional woman was elected compared to the previous cycle (from 246 to 247). This underscores the need for bold measures to support an increase of women in politics at all levels of government. You can access our position paper [here](#).

Regarding the General Election, while we celebrate that a record number of women (246) stood for election, the percentage of women elected increased only marginally, from 23% to 25.3%, with 44 women elected to the Dáil. We are keen to seek your support in discussions leading to the next Programme for Government to introduce legislative gender quotas for local elections.

We recognise that diverse strategies are essential to support women in politics. Co-option into vacant seats has proven effective in reducing barriers to public office for women. After the 2019 local elections, 60 councillors stood down to take up seats in Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann, or the European Parliament. Following this election cycle, 52 councillors will transition to the Oireachtas.

We understand that each political party has its own processes for selecting candidates for co-option. **We ask that you consider advocating for the selection of women—preferably women from diverse backgrounds, including Traveller women and women of colour.**

As Party Leader we are also calling on you and your Party to commit to a balanced government, with a minimum of 40% of Cabinet Ministers, 40% of Junior Ministers, and 40% of Dáil Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs being women.

Co-opted councillors often benefit from increased name recognition and positive associations with their role, which can enhance their prospects in future elections. The incumbency advantage includes factors like established networks, a track record of community engagement, and public visibility. We believe that the co-option process offers a valuable opportunity to improve gender balance in Irish politics.

We are deeply grateful for your attention to this matter and for your support. Please let us know if you would like to discuss this further.

All the best,

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