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**Taoiseach,
Cc; Tánaiste,
Cc; Kathleen Lynch TD Minister of State,
Department of Health and Department of Justice,
Equality & Defence.**

Enough is enough! We call on Government to have Personal Assistance hours re-instated where withdrawn and increased where inadequate.

Dear Taoiseach,

The Centre for Independent Living (CIL) is a national disability organisation run by people with disabilities for people with disabilities. We are a grassroots body with a network of 22 organisations around Ireland. We work to empower and enable people with disabilities to achieve Independent Living as a human and social right.

Independent Living is facilitated by Personal Assistance (PA), with PA it's the person with the disability (known as the 'leader') that directs the service and the PA is answerable only to the leader. Without PA our members don't live, they exist.

This year has already seen our members lose PA hours even though those PA hours allocated were already inadequate. Many were informed just prior to the August Bank Holiday weekend that their PA hours for out of home activities were being withdrawn. Their rights were taken away at the stroke of a pen; gone without process, consultation or warning without further risk assessment or review.

CIL are at a loss to understand this as the withdrawal of PA will result in more pressure on frontline staff and will cost more in the long run. This does not make economic sense. We remind the Government of its obligations not only to its citizens but also pursuant to the EU/IMF Programme of Financial Support for Ireland.

In its 3rd December 2010 Letter of Intent to the EU authorities and the IMF, the Government commits to a strategy of reform that *"is socially fair and protects the most vulnerable"*. The letter refers to the National Recovery Plan which in turn notes that *"the vulnerable in society must be protected as far as possible"*.

It is clear that the EU/IMF agreement places an obligation on Government to protect the vulnerable: the cutting of PA hours is a blatant breach of this.

In order to save money to repay the EU/IMF loan the Government continues to allow the HSE cut personal assistance hours effectively making our members prisoners in their own homes. Funding for PA should be ring-fenced as demand for services has not dropped even though the supply has been curtailed.

Cutting PA hours is not only morally reprehensible but it breaches this State's obligations to the EU/IMF.

We would like the opportunity to discuss this with you at your earliest convenience,

Yours sincerely,

Michael McCabe
Chairperson
CIL, Carmichael House