

Welsh government plans to redefine women to include transgender females

Leaked gender Bill proposals face a backlash from UK Government and rights groups

By Charles Hymas, HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

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The Welsh government is to redefine women to include transgender females under planned new laws.

The proposal was revealed on Sunday in a leaked draft of its Gender Quotas Bill which proposes that half the candidates in any list to be members of the Senedd must be women.

For the purposes of the proposed legislation this includes transgender women, the report stated

The definition further stated that transgender meant “a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning [their] sex to female by changing physiological or other attributes of sex”.

It also stated that a constituency returning officer could not challenge or make any inquiry in relation to a statement made by a candidate.

David TC Davies, the Welsh Secretary, told The Telegraph he had “grave concerns” about the report and was meeting members of various groups to discuss the proposals.

“One of my greatest fears is that the plan will have a detrimental impact on women’s rights across our country. Those rights have been hard fought for and I fear could now be undermined by the Labour-run Welsh Government’s ill-thought policy,” he said.

The plans echo those put forward by the Scottish Government to make it easier for people to legally change gender.

They were blocked by Alister Jack, the Scottish Secretary, who argued that the Bill watered down protections for single sex spaces and contravened UK-wide equality legislation.

Mark Drakeford, the First Minister of Wales, has long argued that he believes “transgender women are women”.

Last year he told the Senedd: “My starting point is the same as Penny Mordaunt’s - the UK minister responsible at the time - who said that the UK government’s starting point was that transgender women are women. That’s my starting point in this debate.

“It is a difficult area where people feel very strongly on different sides of an argument, and an argument that divides people who agree on most other things.

“In such a potentially divisive issue, the responsibility of elected representatives is not to stand on the certainties of their own convictions, but instead to work hard to look for opportunities for dialogue, to find ways of promoting understanding rather than conflict, and to demonstrate respect rather than to look for exclusion ... to me, inclusivity is absolutely what we should be aiming for here.”

Bill ‘unfair’ to women

However, Cathy Larkman, Welsh co-ordinator of the Women’s Rights Network, said the move would undermine the Bill’s gender equality intent.

She said it was likely to see men self-identifying as women to greatly improve their chances of selection and muscling females out.

“Firstly, it undermines the rights of half of the population of Wales. Secondly, they are hijacking legislation that should benefit women and increase female participation in public life in order to embed a toxic and misogynist ideology,” she said.

“Thirdly, they don’t have the legal powers to push this through anyway and are making a calculated risk that no one will oppose them.

“We are putting the Welsh Government on notice. Women will organise to fight this attack on our rights. This is a first step towards full self-ID in law.

“It would introduce gender self-identification which has serious implications for women, and girls in particular, with regards to single sex spaces and services, including in changing

rooms, sports, same-sex intimate care, hospital wards, rape crisis support and domestic violence centres.”

A Welsh Government spokesman said the leaked draft was not the latest version of the report and the wording of the Bill was not correct. She would not say whether that related to the section on transgender women.

“Our proposed model for quotas is designed to maximise the chances of achieving a Senedd comprised of at least 50 per cent women. Work is ongoing on the Bill,” she said.

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