

PRESS RELEASE
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Susie Long Hospice Fund calls on election candidates to commit to implementing National Strategy for Palliative Care if elected to Government in forthcoming General Election

The Susie Long Hospice Fund has issued a call to all election candidates in the Carlow/Kilkenny electoral area to commit now to implementing the National Strategy for Palliative Care if elected to Government at the forthcoming General Election. Under the National Development Framework (2009-2013), Waterford was prioritised as the location for a 20-bed In-patient Palliative Care Unit in the South-East, with Carlow/Kilkenny identified as the location for a 12-bed Satellite Palliative Care Unit. The Susie Long Hospice Fund has written to all election candidates seeking their commitment to making this plan a reality, as well as a face-to-face pre-election meeting to agree the methods by which this commitment can be followed through.

The Susie Long Hospice Fund was set up in 2007 following the untimely death of bowel cancer patient and campaigner Susie Long. Having had to move from Kilkenny to Dublin to avail of essential end of life care at Our Lady's Hospice at Harold's Cross, it was Susie's wish that hospice facilities providing such care to patients and their families be available to all people in Ireland, regardless of a patient's location or resources.

Malcolm Noonan, Chairperson of the Susie Long Hospice Fund, states in the letter to candidates that "The South East region has been identified nationally as one of the most disadvantaged regions in the State in terms of hospice care. In Kilkenny we are fortunate to have an excellent Home Care service but many patients still die in acute hospitals, with little privacy or dignity at this, the most sensitive time in a person's life. In economic terms it is placing a huge financial and resource burden on Health Services, one which the Irish Hospice Foundation maintains would be completely avoidable if adequate hospice facilities were available.

With this in mind, a delegation from the Susie Long Hospice Fund would like to meet with you in the course of the campaign to help make plans for a twelve-bed hospice in Kilkenny, a reality. **We would like to secure your commitment that if elected, you will use your legislative functions as a TD to ensure the implementation of existing Palliative Care plans for the South East, which includes a commitment by the HSE for a Satellite Palliative Care Unit in Kilkenny.**

We would like all candidates to include such a commitment in election literature, but more importantly that you will follow up on such a commitment if you are privileged enough to be elected to the 31st Dail".

The letter concludes with "This election is an opportunity to address the many inequalities that exist across our society. The right to die with dignity, in peace and in comfort is just one of the rights that is being denied thousands of our citizens on a yearly basis. You have the power to change that".

The Susie Long Hospice Fund (SLHF) was set up in October 2007 to provide the highest possible quality of end-of-life care for patients and their families through the establishment of a 12-bed hospice in Kilkenny. The Fund is meeting this challenge through fundraising, increasing awareness of the need and benefits of local hospice care and by lobbying Government for support. Donations can be made directly to the fund at AIB, High St, Kilkenny, Account no: 3462705, Sort code: 93-31-98 The Susie Long Hospice Fund is a registered charity, number CHY17950.

ENDS

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