

6<sup>th</sup> April 2022

## **An Open Letter to the Special Purpose Committee on Gender Quotas and Diversity Measures**

We are delighted that the Special Purpose Committee has considered evidence on the use of quotas and other diversity measures to encourage the election of a more diverse Senedd. We appreciate that the Committee is currently focussing on facilitating the development, negotiation, and agreement of potential recommendations for policy instructions for a Welsh Government Bill on Senedd Reform.

We are a coalition of organisations calling for equal and diverse representation for women as the Senedd considers increasing its size. We especially want to see more Senedd Members who are women from underrepresented groups (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women, LGBTQ+, Disabled women, and women with other protected characteristics). We want a Senedd reflective of the whole population of Wales.

As a campaign, our Diverse 5050 coalition is convinced that one of the surest ways of ensuring equal and diverse representation for women especially from underrepresented groups is through the integration of legally binding quotas. We are delighted to note that the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru have announced that they will be [implementing legally binding gender quotas as part of their co-operation agreement](#). We applaud them for doing this and there must be no rowing back on this commitment.

Research has consistently shown that legally binding quotas are the single most effective tool for increasing women's political representation, as laid out in the evidence provided to the Committee by WEN Wales and other organisations and experts.

The expert legal advice commissioned by WEN Wales and ERS Cymru further shows that gender quotas are legally within reach. We know that gender quotas alone are not enough to ensure the fair representation of women from underrepresented groups but recognise that quotas for other protected characteristics are more difficult to legislate at the present time.

In view of these facts, we urge the Special Purpose Committee to include in its report to the Welsh Government recommendations for:

- Legally binding gender quotas of 50%.

- Strong measures to ensure diversity in the selection of candidates.
- Further work to support the introduction of quotas for other protected characteristics, including race/ethnic minority status, disability, age, sexuality, and gender identity.

We cannot afford to lose another opportunity to right a wrong that has existed for decades now. Women's participation and the success of women as candidates in elections are vital indicators of a representative democracy, and an integral part of achieving a more equal Wales, in line with the ambitions of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

We look forward to the decision of the special purpose committee on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

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