

Joint Open Statement sent 8am, 18th March 2026

Dear Minister O'Brien,

We, the undersigned organisations, are writing to call for an urgent halt to the Government's intervention to remove the Dublin Airport passenger cap.

We are alarmed by the draft Bill (The Dublin Airport (Passenger Capacity) Bill 2026) prepared to do so, and its attempts to legislate exemption from climate obligations. We are hugely concerned for the negative implications that the resultant increase in emissions will have for the public interest - especially children's best interests and public health, both globally and in Ireland. We call for the development of an aviation policy that is aligned with Ireland's climate and human rights obligations, and with best available science.

Since the inclusion of 'lifting the Dublin Airport passenger cap' within the Programme for Government, the need for climate action has become even more apparent, as:

- [The Copernicus Climate Change Service warned](#) that "global temperatures from the past three years (2023-2025) averaged more than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level... the first time a three-year period has exceeded the 1.5°C limit",
- The first climate tipping point [was breached](#),
- [Seven of Earth's critical life-support limits have now been exceeded](#),
- The USA, the world's second-largest GHG-emitter, [withdrew from the Paris Agreement](#),
- the International Court of Justice [reaffirmed](#) the legal obligations of States to act with the highest ambition to prevent foreseeable climate harm,
- Ireland experienced the record-breaking Storm Eowyn, devastating floods after Storm Chandra, and resulting threat to life and livelihood,
- You made a statement confirming the State is [dramatically failing](#) to meet its legally binding climate obligations, making Ireland liable for billions of euros in EU climate fines,
- The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment [reported](#) that Government proposals to lift the passenger cap, "are yet to include adequate, comprehensive and scientifically based assessments of environmental and climate impacts."

Lifting the passenger cap would drive [aviation fossil fuel pollution even higher than its already record-breaking levels](#). Aviation is the [second-largest source](#) of greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector after road transport and, as Minister for Climate and for Transport, it is imperative that you acknowledge that and act accordingly.

The additional tonnes of carbon emissions from these flights will have significant health consequences through multiple, interacting pathways, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations in Ireland and globally. They will translate into numerous avoidable deaths globally over time. These deaths and associated health impacts would be in addition to those attributable to existing flight pollution. This runs counter to Ireland's obligations under the Paris Agreement and its broader public health responsibilities. One preventable death is one too many.

Serving the short-term business interests of a narrow segment of the aviation industry over public health and wellbeing is unacceptable in the context of the State's duty to protect public health, equity and the rights of children - [which you have acknowledged](#).

Ireland has a responsibility to protect the future of our children and the health of people both domestically and globally, now and into the future. As Minister for both Climate and Transport you bear a grave responsibility to provide this protection. We call on you to live up to this responsibility by leaving the passenger cap in place and developing an aviation policy that is aligned with Ireland's climate and human rights obligations, and with best available science.

Children's Rights Over Flights

Irish Doctors for the Environment

ActionAid Ireland

Stop Climate Chaos

Friends of the Earth

*Special Interest Group, Addressing the Climate and Environmental Emergency,
Psychological Society of Ireland*

Centre for Environmental Living & Training

Irish Cycling Campaign

Parents for Future Ireland

Climate Justice Universities Union

Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice

Not Here Not Anywhere

Oxfam Ireland

Stay Grounded

Extinction Rebellion Ireland

The Environmental Pillar