

## **Bill No.10**

**Proposer: Mr Michael Johnston**

**Embargo Until Delivery • Check Against Delivery**

I have the pleasure of presenting bill number 10 which will make necessary changes to the Clergy Permanent Health Insurance Policy, but first let me give you the background to the bill and explain the changes that will be introduced.

At General Synod in 2015, the Dignity in Church Life Charter was approved along with several church policies, including the Clergy Illness Policy. This policy stated that a member of the clergy who was absent from office due to a long-term illness, for over twelve months may receive a payment based on Permanent Health Insurance.

During 2022, the Standing Committee of General Synod approved the Clergy Permanent Health Insurance Policy which was presented to General Synod in May 2023, with a commencement date of 1 July 2023. This version of the policy required any member of the clergy availing of the scheme to be licenced to a Ministry of Contemplation in a diocese. This requirement to be licenced was necessary so that the member of the clergy stayed within the definition of “Service in the Church of Ireland” ensuring that the member of clergy remains a member of the Church of Ireland Clergy Pensions Fund (where applicable) and a contributing member of either the Northern Ireland Clergy Defined Contribution Pension Scheme or the Republic of Ireland Clergy Defined Contribution Pension Scheme, and so that they remain eligible for Death-in-Service benefits. The licence also supported the pastoral relationship between the issuing bishop and the ill member of the clergy.

But the licencing of ill clergy increased clerical representation numbers at General Synod and at diocesan synods. The bill before you removes the licensing requirement for clergy availing of Clergy Permanent Health Insurance by, firstly including a definition of “Clergy PHI Policy” in Chapter 14 of the Constitution, and secondly adding clergy “in receipt of payments under the Clergy PHI Policy” within the definition of Service in the Church of Ireland, so that these clergy continue to be a member of the Church of Ireland Clergy Pensions Fund (where applicable) and a contributing member of either the Northern Ireland Clergy Defined Contribution Pension Scheme or the Republic of Ireland Clergy Defined Contribution Pension Scheme, and so that they remain eligible for Death in Service benefits.

I would note that, assuming this bill is passed, that the staff of the RCB will be redrafting the current Clergy Permanent Health Insurance Policy and Guidelines to remove the licencing of clergy availing of Clergy PHI, with this revised policy to be submitted for approval to Standing Committee during 2024 and then presented to General Synod in 2025 in accordance with the statutes passed at General Synod in 2015. I propose this bill.