

An Taoiseach, Brian Cown TD,
Department of An Taoiseach,
Government Buildings
Merrion Street Upper
Dublin 2

Dear Taoiseach,

My name is Ronan Keogh; I am a young student currently doing the leaving certificate. I have lived in Ireland all my life, eighteen years to be exact.

And I am writing to you as I'm sure many others, both gay and straight have done, advocating for same sex marriage. I know this is a difficult time for you with the current crisis and the budget. But even with your heavy work load I would like you to read this letter in the hope that you'll see how same sex marriage is a step forward in society, not a step back.

This letter isn't just about marriage; it is equally focussed on the social issues that anti-hate crime and harassment laws worked to prevent. Without marriage equality the boys in the changing room during P.E who harassed me and made me hide who I really am, are encouraged to believe that my sexuality means there is something different, wrong and lesser about me. They know that as a gay man I don't have the same rights as they do and they know that I can't have a big, tacky, expensive wedding filled with family and friends no matter how much I may want to. Knowing this fuels their ideals and fuels the many forms of cruelty felt by LGBT young people throughout the country. When I came out to my friends, I knew I wouldn't be seen as equal and I didn't even consider myself equal. How could I? When I know the best I can do is have a long term relationship. How am I supposed to feel accepted? How am I supposed to overcome the ripping, nagging feeling that I am inferior? I have to consciously remind myself everyday that I am worth nothing less than my heterosexual friends, because I happen to be attracted to other guys.

I want Ireland to let me feel right. I want Ireland to help me feel like I mean just as much to the world as my brother or my mum or my dad, because there is nothing wrong with me. There is nothing wrong with being gay. That really is what you're debating in the Dáil right now. I'm not saying that those who disagree aren't allowed to hold their own opinion. I'm just stating that it wasn't my choice to be gay. But I am pretty happy with the way the dice rolled. And I refuse to accept the current law, telling me I must leave my home to be considered worthy of marriage. Honestly I love Ireland and I can't believe that somewhere with such beauty. Somewhere with so many artistic, caring and courageous people would disallow happiness to a whole group of equally shimmering people just because of their sexuality. I've heard the argument that your debate in the Dáil isn't just about sexuality, that what we're talking about now is the need for children to be brought up with certain gender roles filled. I've been told that a child needs a mother and a father to be okay, to be happy, to be educated and brought up right. I completely disagree and on my own behalf I know that if I were to have a child, I would do my best to make him or her be a positive influence on the community. I would pack them a lunch and always put a chocolate biscuit in to brighten their day. I would drop them off at football or choir or dance or anything they wanted to do.

I would sing them to sleep, I would push them on the swings and when they are little I will let them win races by no more than a centimetre. I would raise them the exact same way my

amazing parents raised me. I would raise them to be no one but themselves and I would raise them to respect the same in others.

I have been blessed with so much love in my life, my parents, my two beautiful sisters and my favourite and only brother. And I cannot claim to understand how that love could miraculously be absent if I had to dads or two mums. I know I could care for a child just as well as my parents have. I know I can provide them with the same support and provide them with just as stable household. I want to be respected and I want to be accepted.

Just like every other person in this world. So I am not asking to get married in a Catholic church or intrude on the rights of those establishments. I am not asking to disrespect any other traditions. I just want to be able to say I'm married to my neighbours when they come over dinner. I want homosexuality to stop being treated like a bad word. Like one of those words you have to stop yourself from saying around five year olds. I want children to grow up understanding diversity and understanding that marriage is about love, not gender roles. I want them to grow into people who will not use the phrase "That's so gay" and they won't use it because they're told it is politically incorrect and they won't use it because they know it doesn't make sense! In 50 years, I want for same-sex marriage to be just as blatantly obvious as woman's rights and inter-racial marriage.

I just want to be equal and what a better place to start than Ireland.

Yours Sincerely,

Ronan