

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i [ymgyngoriad y Pwyllgor Biliau Diwygio](#) ar [Fil Senedd Cymru \(Aelodau ac Etholiadau\)](#).

This response was submitted to the [Reform Bill Committee consultation](#) on the [Senedd Cymru \(Members and Elections\) Bill](#).

SCME(P)25 Ymateb gan: | Response from: UNISON

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Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill

About UNISON

1. UNISON is the UK's largest trade union organising and representing 1.3 million public sector workers UK (United Kingdom) wide, including 100,000 public sector workers across Wales.
2. Our members, 85 per cent of whom are women, work in the delivery of public services through direct public sector provision, private and voluntary contractors providing public services, and in the essential utilities. They include frontline staff and managers, working full or part-time in public administrations, local authorities, health and social care, the police and justice service, university, colleges and schools, the electricity, gas, environment and water industries, transport, and in the voluntary and community sectors.

UNISON's Official Position

3. The Senedd has seen an expansion of powers since its inception in 1999 as the National Assembly for Wales. This expansion of powers comes with a commensurate demand for increased expertise in both the execution of government by the elected executive, and increased scrutiny of the executive by the legislature.
4. Coinciding with the growth and evolution of the Senedd's powers, has been the increased support by the Welsh public for devolution and the greater degree of



self-determination and autonomy on the issues for which the Senedd can legislate.

5. An enlarged Senedd should reflect the diversity and demographics of the population at large. UNISON will support measures that attempt to overcome difficulties that may make this harder to achieve.
6. As an instrument intending to encourage and spread greater democracy with Wales, UNISON is supportive of the 'Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections Bill).
7. This document sets out UNISON Cymru/Wales rationale for support of the bill.

Expanding the Senedd membership

8. As earlier affirmed, the increased expansion of legislative powers of the Senedd places additional demand on both the executive and the legislature to ensure – to its fullest potential – good and effective governance to serve Wales.
9. In UNISON's view, the bills intention to expand the elected members of the Senedd (from 60 to 96), greatly increases the governance potential of the executive to deliver its mandate.
10. First, an expansion of the Senedd allows for a greater pool of candidates to seek election. Not only does this widen democratic participation within Wales, it allows for a more diverse, representative legislature. Commensurately, there exists an opportunity to introduce candidates from a wealth of experiences and skills that could significantly assist good and effective governance.
11. The benefits to both branches of government (the legislature and the executive) are axiomatic.
12. For the executive, the elected government would be able to call upon a stronger pool of talent for ministerial appointments and their supporting positions but also to the myriad committees and less public facing arms of government. Furthermore, an increased headcount, will result in a reduced workload of individuals allowing them to gain expertise and specialise which, in theory, will facilitate improved governance and decision-making.
13. Given that any legitimate proposal for expansion must account for the ability of branches of government to check and balance against each other, it is UNISON's view that the bill accomplishes being of proportionate benefit to the legislature.
14. The legislatures' ability for scrutiny will see an equitable increase with the executive's ability to legislate.

15. UNISON accepts the assertion that the Senedd, by most measures, in comparison with nation-states, administrations, territories etc. of similar size is too small to exercise its powers effectively and therefore reform is required.
16. However, there is a long-term concern pertaining to the deficit in electoral participation not just in Senedd elections but across public life. It is the view of UNISON that this bill should – should it pass – be accompanied by a well-publicised and effective roll out of public information so that a better understanding of the new electoral system can be delivered. UNISON has concerns that unless voter turnout sees a considerable increase in participation the popular arguments against reform, primarily the increased running costs to the public, and a mistrust of the political class, could diminish the status of an enlarged Senedd.

Reform of the electoral system

17. UNISON is supportive of the bills intention to reform the electoral system in Wales including the intention to hold Senedd elections on a four-year cycle. UNISON's primary rationale for support the shortening of the electoral cycle is due to existing legislation such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act that secures long-term policy making and acts as a safeguard against short-term policy making encouraged by electoral cycles.
18. UNISON Cymru/Wales is supportive of proportional representation as a fairer, more democratic system. However, UNISON's policy is in support of a proportional system through a single transferrable vote above the current D'Hondt method. However, UNISON does note that nation-states, administrations, and territories of comparable size, both in population and of government use the D'Hondt method and is preferable to the First Past The Post (FPTP) system currently employed for General Elections in the United Kingdom.
19. A significant majority of UNISON's membership is female, and as a democratic organisation, is committed to equality. The bill's stated intention of this provision, to facilitate a greater gender balance in the Senedd is both a progressive and democratic action. UNISON would be supportive of any provision that would facilitate the participation of a more diverse representative democracy. Therefore, UNISON is supportive of the bill to make provision for electors to have a single constituency vote through a closed proportional list though it has reservations about the introduction of closed lists, expanded upon in paragraph 20.
20. On the bills intent to introduce closed lists, UNISON does note that this system is proposed as an attempt to address gender imbalance in the Senedd. However, this proposal is not without its imperfections, chiefly, that it shore's up

and secures established political parties. As stated earlier, UNISON is affiliated to the Labour party, but as an organisation which champions democracy, it has reservations over measures which potentially stymie political action. Moreover, it is within the gift of existing political parties to address participation and equality within their respective structures should there be the will to do so.