

**SCECLB38-P Dr. Louise K. Davidson-Schmich, Professor of Political Science,  
University of Miami, USA**

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Biliau Diwygio | Reform Bill Committee

Bil Senedd Cymru (Rhestrau Ymgeiswyr Etholiadol) | Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill

Ymateb gan Dr. Louise K. Davidson-Schmich, Athro Gwyddor Gwleidyddiaeth,  
Prifysgol Miami, UDA | Evidence from Dr. Louise K. Davidson-Schmich, Professor of  
Political Science, University of Miami, USA

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**What are your views on the general principles of the Bill and the need for legislation to deliver the Welsh Government's stated policy objective (to make the Senedd a more effective legislature by ensuring it is broadly representative of the gender make-up of the population)?**

As a political scientist who has spent her career studying women's political representation, I view gender equality among elected representatives as a highly worthwhile goal for several reasons:

- First, democracy -- rule by the people -- is based on "re-presenting" the population in legislative bodies. If half of the people are women, it follows that half of the representatives in a democracy should be too.
- Second, extensive research indicates that when women are present in decision making bodies the resulting policy decisions are more likely to reflect women citizens' needs and preferences.
- Third, social science research finds that when women hold high profile elective offices other women and girls are more likely to become interested in, and knowledgeable about, political affairs in the country. More citizens are likely to engage in public affairs.
- Fourth, studies from fields as diverse as political science, business, and law find that diverse groups are better at problem solving and make better decisions than homogeneous groups. Legislative outcomes are likely to be better if the legislature is more diverse.
- Fifth, political science survey research shows that citizens are more likely to view the legislature and the laws it passes as legitimate when these decisions are made by gender-balanced bodies. When decisions are made mostly by men acting alone they are seen less favorably by the general public (men and women alike).

## **What are your views on the system of enforcement and potential sanctions for non-compliance proposed in the Bill?**

Political science research shows that enforcement and potential sanctions are vital to making legislative quotas work. Without these mechanisms parties tend to "play with" quotas rather than "playing by them", meaning that quotas do not lead to higher percentages of women actually being elected. The mechanisms described in the bill would make it effective; removing the CRO's powers would greatly weaken the bill.

I am not sure about what might happen with the clause that specifies candidates must self-declare whether they are a women and that this self-declaration be taken at "face value." However, I suspect that far-right, anti-gender parties such as the AfD in Germany, the Trump Republicans in the United States, the National Rally in France, or the Vlaams Belang, would likely have men declare they were women to a) protest the idea of a quota and b) avoid having to follow the quota.

If Wales has identity cards with gender markers on them I would recommend requiring candidates to show official documentation of whether they were women.

## **Are there any potential barriers to the implementation of the Bill's provisions? If so, what are they, and are they adequately taken into account in the Bill and the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment?**

No barriers that I see.

## **Are any unintended consequences likely to arise from the Bill?**

This bill could potentially disadvantage intersex people who biologically are neither male nor female. Their suitability for a certain list place could be challenged by opponents and their personal medical information be made a matter of public controversy.

Those who identify as non-binary may encounter problems as well.

## **What are your views on the Welsh Government's assessment of the financial and other impacts of the Bill?**

I am unable to professionally assess this question.

## **What are your views on the balance between the information contained on the face of the Bill and what is left to subordinate legislation? Are the powers for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation appropriate?**

I am unable to professionally assess this question.

**Do you have any views on matters relating to the legislative competence of the Senedd including compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights?**

Article 14 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Political science research indicates that voter discrimination is not the cause of women's political underrepresentation. Instead political parties routinely fail to nominate and promote women candidates. This legislation would help put a stop to such sex discrimination.

**Do you have any views on matters related to the quality of the legislation, or to the constitutional or other implications of the Bill?**

No.

**Are there any other issues that you would like to raise about the Bill and the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum or any related matters?**

In the interest of terseness, I have not provided a bibliography of academic research to support my points above. However, if you are interested I would be happy to provide such references.

**Anything else?**

Thank you for considering supporting such an important bill.