

**Invitation to attend the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports and Media to discuss; A safe and respectful working environment in the arts.**

**Opening statement:**

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann welcomes the ‘Speak Up; A Call for Change’ initiative by Minister Catherine Martin T.D. and congratulates The Minister, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, the Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and all involved in its development. It is a timely report, fostering a safer and more respectful environment for the arts.

During the past year Comhaltas re-stated and widely distributed, internally and externally, its long-standing mission and ethos statement: Who We Are; Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann’s Vision, Values, Mission and Ethos are guided by many principles:

- The essence of our movement as we interpret it, is that it is all embracing and inclusive of everyone regardless of race, religion or ability.
- The core values of our services have always been underpinned by honesty, openness, fairness, the dignity of each person, free from harassment, anti-sectarian and anti-racist.
- We believe in the intrinsic value of every person and we aim to further the dignity of all associated with our movement.
- We want each individual to avail of opportunities for self-expression in the pursuit of Irish traditional music, song, dance and language.
- We promote inclusivity, equal opportunity for all regardless of gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious belief, or lack thereof, race, ethnicity or nationality.

As a community, participation-based intergenerational movement Comhaltas supports the advancement of these values across the overall culture and arts sector and the elimination of any damaging behaviour.

Comhaltas is a voluntary organisation with 430 Branches in Ireland and 18 countries dedicated to the preservation, promotion and development of the Irish cultural traditions delivering services throughout the island of Ireland, the Irish diaspora and across the globe. Comhaltas’s 18 cultural centres support its voluntary structures which collectively provide services to 3 million people annually. As a multi-faceted organisation Comhaltas is widely acknowledged for its unparalleled contribution to the vibrancy of Irish traditional music today, especially amongst young people, throughout Ireland and among the Irish Diaspora; this has largely been achieved through its holistic educational programme. The various strands of its education programme are facilitated and delivered through its democratic structures as are all Comhaltas events, at every level up to and including Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann which consistently attracts c. 500,000 people.

COTHROMAÍOCHT: Respect; Equality; Opportunity, offers an insight into the scale and scope of CCÉ’s activities and projects. It details statistically Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann’s status in relation to gender balance throughout the organisation and outlines our intended delivery of a range of training and mentoring supports and resources at all levels, designed to further advance a positive and lasting culture of respect and dignity throughout Comhaltas and the overall Irish cultural sector. Throughout its 70 years in existence Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann has remained committed to the ideals of providing appropriate opportunities for young people and all those who engage with the Irish cultural traditions, providing opportunities for self-expression and enabling them to reach their full potential.

Comhaltas looks forward to working with the Minister and the Department in the advancement of COTHROMAÍOCHT: Respect; Equality; Opportunity.