

Katherine Zappone

16 DECEMBER 2015

Katherine Zappone's plan is workable, it is innovative and it has the capacity to profoundly improve people's quality of life, both locally and nationally. The plan covers all age groups, demographics and social backgrounds so that no one is left behind. It is founded on Katherine's core principles of equality, fairness and opportunity.

Equality

An Equal Start in Childhood

Inclusive Communities

Championing Women

Opportunity

Education: Heart of our Recovery

Opportunities for Older People

Political Reform

Fairness

Fairness in Housing

A Vibrant Economy

Water: Back to Basics

Equality

Katherine is running for election to work with people to make full equality possible. There is no reason why this can't be done. The type of Ireland Katherine is working for is a Republic where every single person - irrespective of class, colour, creed or social background - has an equal chance to flourish and to reach their true potential.

An Equal Start in Childhood

Investing in the children of Dublin South West is the best way to cut poverty and inequality. We can only ensure all children get an equal start by investing in high quality early care and education, after school care and children's health services.

As an educator Katherine is fighting for substantial increases in spending to ensure excellence and affordability in early childhood and after-school services. In her 'Equal Start' report she outlines a pathway to Nordic-style early years and childhood support services in Ireland that would guarantee every child an equal, high-quality start in life.

Katherine proposes the establishment of a one-stop shop for family services that would provide development and wellness monitoring for all children, access routes to early intervention services and parenting resources. The initiatives in 'Equal Start' will greatly improve the education and health outcomes for all children in Ireland.

Inclusive Communities

Disability must not be a barrier to equality. Katherine is fighting to reverse cuts to frontline disability services and carer supports. Dublin South West needs funding to develop community based infrastructures.

She has published the Right to Love Bill (2014), which removes the outdated requirement that people with disabilities have to be married in order to have intimate relationships, and this will ensure respect and equality.

Katherine Zappone

Katherine is seeking targeted funding for childcare providers and schools so that there are enough special needs assistants and resources in local schools.

Through her community work in Dublin South West Katherine has seen that job activation supports must be made available to all people with disabilities. In the Dáil she will ensure that the economic contribution by carers is recognised by the state and that eligibility for medical cards is based on medical need.

Championing Women

Katherine champions equal opportunities for women in the workplace, education, health services and public life. Family-services such as affordable and accessible childcare are vital for women to progress in society.

Low pay and precarious work conditions are barriers to women balancing work, care, education and public participation. Katherine is passionately campaigning for decent working conditions, including a living wage and abolishing low and zero hours contracts which impact women disproportionately.

Katherine has been steadfast in calling on the Government to reverse the disproportionate cuts to lone parents' supports and has worked to create fair policies to support one parent families.

Katherine is also campaigning for greater investment in women's health and maternity services. She wants BreastCheck rolled out to all women aged 65-69. Funding for the forthcoming maternity strategy needs to be ring fenced and the midwife ratios need to be brought to international standards. Katherine supports the campaign to repeal the 8th amendment.

Opportunity

Katherine is focusing on progressive policies for our local communities which will increase household incomes, provide proper access to education, protect and create jobs and offer more opportunities to our young people. This General Election offers an opportunity to change Irish politics forever and provides a platform where the needs of working people are the top priority.

Education: Heart of our Recovery

As co-founder of An Cosán, a centre for learning, leadership and enterprise, Katherine has witnessed first-hand that investment in education is an investment in our society.

Funding for primary and secondary schools is inadequate. By ensuring every child reaches their full potential we can achieve better educated and healthier workers as well as greater equality. Katherine also supports the calls for ending the religious discrimination in school admissions against unbaptised children.

Katherine agrees with parents, students and teachers in Dublin South West that we need smaller classrooms in well-funded primary and schools. By reducing class sizes we can meet the needs of all students and support them individually.

The potential of the community education sector hasn't been fully recognised in Ireland and requires investment and encouragement.

Affordable third level education must be realised with proper grants, supports and fair fee structures so education is accessible to everyone. Katherine has also been a strong advocate for the rights of lone parents to higher education.

Opportunities for Older People

As an Oireachtas member and community activist Katherine is a strong voice for older people and works in partnership with local active retirement groups.

Katherine Zappone

At every opportunity she fights to increase community services and to protect the free GP care and free travel schemes from Government cutbacks.

Pensions must be kept ahead of the cost of living while cuts to secondary income supports must be reversed. She is standing in solidarity with teachers in their campaign for reversal of cuts to their pension entitlements.

Katherine is calling for the introduction of a universal pension which recognises the economic contribution made by homemakers and the introduction of a homemaker's tax credit that actively recognises the contribution of care.

Katherine supports the abolition of mandatory retirement age. In the Seanad she has been a key advocate for the National Positive Ageing Strategy and the development of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People.

Political Reform

Our broken system of politics must be fixed.

Katherine's commitment to Oireachtas reform was demonstrated by her leadership during the Seanad referendum. She firmly believes the will of the people must be implemented with one-person one-vote for the Seanad.

The Dáil must also be reformed to balance the power between the cabinet and TDs, and she strongly advocates that all political parties should relax the use of party whips.

The gap between politics and the people of Dublin South West must be closed. Katherine proposes the establishment of a National Civic Forum, made up of citizens and politicians, to allow direct engagement on laws and policy.

As a former CEO of the National Women's Council, Katherine is passionate about increasing women's participation in politics.

Fairness

Katherine understands that the economic collapse has created real hardship for families and communities across Dublin South West and, indeed, Ireland. In the light of Ireland's recovering economy, it is time to begin spending on public services again. She is campaigning for that focus to be on those who are most vulnerable in society and those most impacted by the austerity cuts.

Fairness in Housing

Katherine recognises the severe difficulties facing many households and wants the government to declare the housing crisis as a national emergency.

A number of steps must be taken. Katherine has published a bill that would ensure greater protections for tenants and more favourable tax treatment for landlords who opt-in. She also proposes an innovative community-based model for an immediate way to house those who are homeless or seeking refuge in Ireland.

Katherine believes the problems of the housing market cannot be solved in the private rented sector alone. The ultimate solution is to build more homes, private and social.

She also believes measures to tackle the mortgage arrears crisis must be delivered without delay. The banks must act according to the Central Bank's code of conduct so that the unfair power disparity between the lender and the troubled borrower is removed.

A Vibrant Economy

Having created over 100 local jobs in An Cosán, Fledglings and the Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative Katherine firmly believes that community services and small businesses are the backbone of our local economy.

Two-thirds of people work in small firms and not multinationals and their role is key in reducing our local unemployment rate which is above the national average. A vibrant economy must benefit everyone. The tax burden on low and middle income earners must be cut including further reductions in the

USC. Priority must also be given to reversing the cuts and austerity which impacted on those who are the most vulnerable in our communities.

All policies must ensure that employment delivers real financial benefits for all households. Failure to address these inequalities will be a barrier to a stable economy.

Water: Back to Basics

The next Government must put the public ownership of our water services to the Irish people through a referendum. As a strong independent voice for the concerns of local people Katherine voted against the water bill and the civil debt bill which allows non-payment to be pursued through the courts.

Katherine has called for a public water authority to ensure a modern, fair and sustainable water supply. She has proposed fair policies ensuring that those who cannot afford to pay should not have to live in fear of their taps being cut off.

Conservation of one of our most precious resources must be achieved through an efficient water system but the way Irish Water was set up has failed to deliver any environmental goals.

About Katherine

As an educator, entrepreneur, and public representative, Katherine has thirty years of experience working with the people of Dublin South West, and puts community at the heart of public life.

Katherine is running for the Dáil because she believes that a more equal Ireland can be achieved. She believes that politics needs to become more collaborative, and the gap between the issues facing our communities and what is prioritised in Leinster House must be bridged through working together with the people.

Katherine is running as an Independent because Irish politics needs people with the freedom to think creatively and act courageously now more than ever.

Katherine is a co-founder of An Cosán in Tallaght, Ireland's largest community education organisation, which is breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty and unemployment. She also led the establishment of the Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative, was an Irish Human Rights Commissioner, and was CEO of the National Women's Council of Ireland.

As a member of the Oireachtas, Katherine is a strong voice for the people of Tallaght, Citywest, Templeogue, Rathfarnham, Knocklyon, Firhouse and Greenhills and has published bills on housing, childcare, political reform and the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. She is a member of the Justice & Equality Committee, and Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights in Leinster House.

As a founder of Marriage Equality, a core partner of Yes Equality, and a leading campaigner over the past decade, Katherine knows that determination and perseverance can achieve positive results to change society for the better.