



**Public Consultation on Review of Student Grant Scheme,
SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland)
Submission from the Migrant Rights Centre
April 16th 2020**

Introduction

Founded in 2001, MRCI is a leading national community work organisation working at the intersection of immigration and employment policy and law with migrants predominantly in non-unionized low paid and precarious sectors of employment; we work directly with migrants who become undocumented, with people who have been trafficked for forced labour, with minority ethnic young people, and with migrant workers in domestic work, homecare, restaurants, hotels and catering, cleaning, agriculture and fisheries.

Our work combines frontline services, policy, and advocacy with a community development approach that builds deep connections with migrants and supports their participation and leadership on migrant rights issues. MRCI provides information, supports and advocacy on over 2,200 cases a year through our Drop-in Centre. For the past 20 years, MRCI has been bringing issues of discrimination, exploitation and social exclusion into public view.

Overview

Education is a basic and fundamental human right - not an entitlement. To view access to education through the lens of 'entitlement', only serves to continue systems of exclusion, poverty and inequality. There are many young people growing up in Ireland who face unnecessary barriers on their way to reach their full educational potential, and some who don't get a chance at all. The purpose of education grants is to enable opportunities and to empower people to reach their full potential.

MRCI is deeply concerned about marginalised and seldom heard cohorts of university-age-going young people and adults from migrant backgrounds whose home is Ireland, being denied opportunities to progress their educational capacity and potential, because they fall outside the terms of the SUSI grant, and are not eligible for any other financial support. The Student Support Regulations 2020 prescribe a very narrow category of immigration statuses eligible to apply for a student grant.

In practice, these Regulations often exclude children of migrant workers, including undocumented young people; young people recently regularised; children born in the state to undocumented parents, and others with precarious immigration status. The problems arise when a person has to prove their years of residency, as often the years preceding a young person acquiring residency are not recognised in the application process.

It is important to note that the State has invested in the lives of children and young people from a migrant background at primary and post-primary school level. It is a waste of potential and investment. It would serve the State better to see a return on that investment.

The current system does not allow for flexibility. It does not acknowledge the complexities of people's lives or the impact that visa permissions have on a person's access of opportunities.

For example, imagine a young person who moved to Ireland as a child and has been recently granted a Stamp 4. Now as a young adult they find themselves without the support of their family. As you can imagine, without any financial supports from family, this young person is faced with covering their student contribution fees, rent, bills, food, transport, and materials for college, by themselves. A grant from SUSI would make all the difference: without it, would have a devastating impact on this person. They would most likely have to drop out of college, and at high risk of becoming homeless. By staying in college, they have a chance to pursue their ambitions and continue with education, an opportunity to contribute to Irish society. Ireland is their home. They need this vital supports to be able to plan and build their futures here.

Recommendations:

- To allow for flexibility as not every applicant fits into the strict set of criteria set by the current system;
- To remove the residency rule to enable access to SUSI for people from migrant backgrounds, including undocumented, recently documented and those with precarious immigration status.

Ends

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