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## **The Case for Equality Law Reform in Northern Ireland**

People in Northern Ireland have less legal protection under our current equality laws than people living in other parts of the UK. Gaps in Northern Ireland's equality law framework mean that people here cannot challenge some types of discrimination because the laws simply do not exist to protect them.

The Equality Commission is hosting a conference in Belfast on Tuesday 22 November, to examine the need for reform of our equality laws and build understanding and support for its drive to make equality a priority.

Chief Commissioner Geraldine McGahey says: "Equality legislation needs to be updated to ensure there is better protection against discrimination than there is here currently. We want to focus on what needs to be done to encourage policy makers to make equality law here simpler, stronger and more effective for everyone in Northern Ireland."

The conference will cover the history and future of Northern Ireland's equality legislation and the experiences of implementation of single equality legislation in Britain, with the Equality Act 2010, and the Employment Equality Acts and Equal Status Acts in Ireland. There will be an in-depth look at the need for reform of the laws on age discrimination and race discrimination, and sessions on the views of lawyers, employers and trade unions on the need for equality law reform. Finally, an invited panel of people involved in advocating for disability rights, women's rights, LGBTQIA rights and race equality rights will discuss their views on the need for law reform.

Ms McGahey concludes: "This is about encouraging change in the legal protections for everyone in Northern Ireland. Strong equality legislation has served us well in the past. It has been fundamental to the building of more inclusive and fairer workplaces, which in turn has helped to make our society more understanding and more accepting of difference. Equality law can and should protect everyone from discrimination."