Cathaoirleach, members of the committee & fellow speakers,

I sit before you today not just as myself, but as one of hundreds of thousands of women raped every single day. My story is not unique. That in itself is the tragedy.

I want to speak about the current legislation which allows access to a victim's private counselling notes, under the guise of ensuring a "fair trial." I want to emphasize: I believe everyone has a right to a fair trial. I also believe a fair trial should be based solely on real evidence, truth and fact.

The Government's proposed changes still leave open the possibility that a survivor's most personal words can be demanded and scrutinised in court.

That possibility alone is enough to deter many survivors from seeking the essential help they need to move forward after the unthinkable. Notes written in therapy, which is a space where survivors like me can begin to process the unthinkable, regain some sense of safety, and slowly piece ourselves back together, hold no evidentiary value.

I have had the privilege of speaking with many survivors across the country - our community is growing at alarming rates. I am acutely aware that I am not here representing just myself today, I am here representing my community - a community of people who have faced the very worst yet still, with unimaginable strength, manage to face each day.

In that vein, I want to bring their voices to this room today. With their permission, I share the following quotes:

"I felt stripped bare a second time in that courtroom, not by my attacker but by the system I turned to for justice."

"I never went to counselling because I couldn't bear the thought of my notes being used against me."

“I would not want to put myself through the emotional turmoil of pursuing a court case in Ireland. The way survivors are treated is unacceptable and needs to change.”

“It is a brutal victim blaming system. I know I will eventually find a way through what happened but I am not convinced I will survive the brutality of the "justice" system.’”

“This country has ruined our lives. I’m still being harassed. Reporting is worse than the experience itself by a million”

These are not abstract fears. They are real lived experiences and there are thousands more I could read to you today.

Counselling notes are third-party, interpretive documents. A counsellor was not present at the time of the crime and therefore they cannot speak to the facts of what happened. And crucially—it is not the victim who is on trial. Yet too many of us leave courtrooms feeling as if we were the ones accused.

Let’s be clear: this practice is not about truth or fairness. This practice is used to undermine victims and damage their credibility. I have experienced this first hand. It is an outdated, misogynistic process that has no place in a justice system claiming to be “trauma-informed”.

Allowing access to these notes turns therapy into evidence. It tells survivors that their most private attempts to heal can be weaponised against them. Instead of finding safety in counselling, we are forced to self-censor, to stay silent, or to carry our trauma alone. That is not justice—it is retraumatisation, sanctioned by this system.

The Government say they want to create a more “trauma-informed” system. But by continuing to allow this process, they are only serving to further silence those who have already suffered immeasurable trauma. What we are left with is not a trauma-informed system, but a perpetrator-friendly one.

Other countries, such as the United States, do not allow access to a victim's counselling notes. And importantly, there is no evidence that excluding these notes makes any difference to conviction rates. Survivors there can access the help they need without fear of it being used against them. We deserve the same.

It is not just survivors calling for this. The message is consistent and united: survivors and professional therapy bodies alike are clear—there must be total exclusion of counselling notes from criminal trials. Nothing less is acceptable.

Let me finish by stressing this: three minutes and one survivor is not enough for you to understand the full extent of how damaging this process is. This committee must hear much more—directly from survivors who have endured it—before deciding what is truly fair.

I urge you to recognise that justice cannot be built on violating those who have already been violated. The only just path forward is a complete ban on the use of counselling notes in trial. Survivors should not have to choose between healing and seeking justice.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.