



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

**Message for Post-Primary Students
from President Michael D. Higgins**

Today it is my wish to send a message of support, encouragement and thanks to all the secondary school students across our island of Ireland.

As you are only too well aware, the past months have been testing times for all of our people. You, with them, have had to deal with the many losses and challenges experienced as a consequence of COVID-19, and you also have had to carry an additional burden of uncertainty due to your circumstances in education.

To any of you who have lost relatives and loved ones, may I offer my deepest sympathies. To others among you, worried about a friend or relative who is sick or vulnerable, or whose work places them at risk, we must all continue to give our support and solidarity, in whatever way we can.

Many of you may be from homes that are facing financial insecurity, with all the anxiety for you and your loved ones that such uncertainty brings.

It is important to know that you are not alone. Thousands of families across the country are sharing your experience, and, as President of Ireland, I stand with you, and them, at this time.

Lives and expectations have been turned upside down. The plans and hopes that were held at the start of this year have had to be revisited, perhaps adjusted. For you, exams, sporting events, trips to the Gaeltacht, visits to relatives, holidays, being with your friends, budding romances even – these important and enriching social experiences that usually shape a young person's character – have been paused, put on hold, as we await the advice as to what is asked of us for the months to come.

I thank you for your solidarity and patience, as it has been expressed and as to how it will endure.

What you must know is that all your actions over the past two months, all the restrictions you have endured, have helped to keep us all safe.

You and your families have all played your part. Without doubt, your actions have saved lives. For that I thank you, but I also ask again that you stick with it, as we will all be asked to do more in the weeks and months ahead.

The past two months have helped us to recognise the value of the solidarity of those who have been supporting us through these difficult times. I am certain your teachers and parents have sought to make this time less difficult for you. It has been difficult for them too, so do continue to be patient and kind and give them the support that they deserve.

You can be proud that you have all played your part in helping to curtail the spread of the Coronavirus by staying indoors, practising social distancing, maintaining hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Thank you for being so responsible. Your actions have helped save the lives of many.

As President of Ireland, I value my relationship with young people like you. Rarely do I come away from such encounters without feeling entirely hopeful and positive for the future. I am encouraged by the energy, creativity and enthusiasm, and humour too, that you bring to so many areas of endeavour, and your fearless and resolute attitude in pushing for positive change in our society – transforming what needs to change as we seek to build a participatory republic of equality in every way.

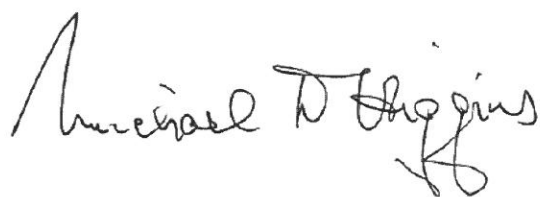
I have witnessed this in those of you participating in the Gaisce awards, those who took part in the youth-led climate demonstrations, and all of you who are making such positive contributions to your communities as active, inter-connected, young citizens. Molaim sibh.

I ask that you hold on to this ambition for Ireland and for the world as you set out on your life adventures. Commit to playing your part in the creation of a world that removes the obstacles standing between so many of its people and their full participation.

May I wish you all well. Enjoy what you can make of the summer. Read, play, spend time outdoors and enjoy your time with those around you.

However, stay safe and continue to keep others safe. The crisis will pass, and out of this dark time will emerge a brighter period ahead for all of us to enjoy.

Míle buíochas as bhur n-iarrachtaí, bhur foighde is bhur idéileacas is gach beannacht do'n todchaí.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael D. Higgins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'M' and a stylized 'H' at the end.

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

May, 2020