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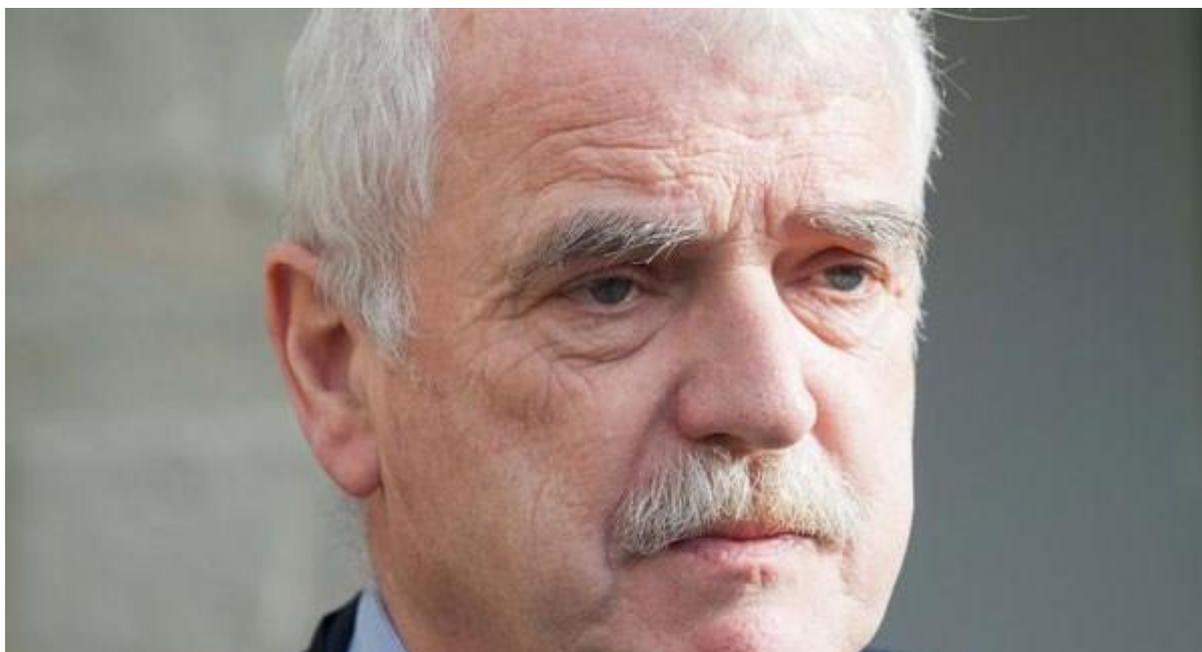
Finian McGrath defiant as family say video post adds insult to injury

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By Daniel McConnell

Political Editor

A defiant Disability Minister Finian McGrath has restated his claim that some families of disabled people are “dumping” their relatives in state institutions and failing to visit them.



In the *Irish Examiner* last Tuesday, Ina O’Dwyer, the mother of a disabled man penned an open letter to Mr McGrath to express her “hurt, anger and upset” at his claims.

Mr McGrath insisted his comments were not directed at Mrs O’Dwyer but said he was clear that many disabled people are being neglected in state-run homes.

“I am also the parent of a daughter who is disabled. I was not having a go at her or targeting her.

“My comments were directed at those in Irish society who do not visit or have any contact with family members who are in institutions,” he said.

“I have met those people, I have seen those tears. I am the minister for disability and those with disabilities feel very marginalised. Many are in institutions and they don’t want to be and they never get a visit from a family member.

“They are left there for years, sometimes the family are the staff who work there and in many cases the staff bring them out to their own families,” he added.

“But what I would say to that family, is that I have a plan to de-congregate these institutions to take out 223 people, with the consent of the families. We are buying 50 additional changes,” Mr McGrath said in an interview with this paper.

In her letter, Mrs O’Dwyer said: “I feel sickened to the very core of my being. My baby, soon to be 41 years old, is still just that, a baby.

“Minister, have you ever had the experience of changing the nappy of a 40-year-old, even once? How would you feel about 40 years of constant nappy changing? This is the reality.”

The O’Dwyer family have also said they are angered and appalled by a video posted by Mr McGrath on his Facebook page in response to their outrage.

“Finian McGrath has responded again this time with a video blog on his Facebook page, however he has totally changed what he actually said,” the family have said.

Mrs O’Dwyer’s daughter Laura added: “I am so outraged. I wrote to him [a personal response] which he immediately deleted off his page.

“It is less than acceptable, and a huge insult to refer to my mother’s letter as a bit of a row.”