

'I have not dumped, abandoned or kidnapped my beautiful and precious son,' says mother

Minister says sorry over hurtful remarks

THE MOTHER OF a 41-year-old resident at the St Mary of the Angels facility in Beaufort has been given a personal apology over remarks made by Disability Minister Finian McGrath.

BY AIDAN O'CONNOR

Ina O'Dwyer has received extensive media coverage this week over her open letter addressed to Minister McGrath over remarks he made about families who have loved ones with intellectual and physical needs staying at residential centres.

Minister McGrath suggested that parents were 'dumping' their children in institutions which was a key matter of concern in government strategy.

Ina O'Dwyer from Cahersiveen wrote a scathing and heart-felt response, questioning the minister's

suitability to his position.

Ina was 19 years old when she gave birth to her son, Bernard. He was born "brutally brain damaged", she said, and has suffered years of pain and struggle.

"My son was blessed when, at five years of age, he was welcomed into the wonderful care of the Franciscan Sisters, to whom we are eternally grateful, at St Mary of the Angels in Beaufort," Ina wrote.

"Everything in his world changed for the better," Ina added. She said that with regular visits home, Bernard enjoys the best of both worlds.

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Ina O'Dwyer and her son Bernard at home in Cahersiveen on Wednesday.



Minister sorry over hurtful remarks

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"So minister, I have neither dumped, abandoned nor kidnapped my beautiful and precious son. I have always been there with him and always will. How can you judge me when you don't know me?"

Following widespread mainstream and social media exposure of Ina's letter, Minister McGrath responded on Tuesday night.

"Dear Ina, sorry if my comments offended you," Minister McGrath said.

He said that his comments were never directed at Ina or families like hers.

"My comments were directed solely at people that

never visit or keep contact with our disabled community," he said.

"Your family and good self were never the target of my comment. I commend and value your good work and care for your son."

Ina O'Dwyer said that she is eternally grateful for all the support she received since she published her letter.

"All the publicity backed up by the floods of messages of support plus those directed at the minister has led to a personal apology being given to me. Of this I am eternally grateful to all my friends, new and old," Ina said.