Statement to the Joint Committee on Climate, Environment and Energy

Thank you, Chair, Committee members and Mary Robinson for the invitation to speak today. I am here on behalf of Coalition 2030 and the 75 organisations it represents. I am a 25-year-old environmental activist and youth worker. I have a background in sustainable agriculture, food systems, and climate science, where I have engaged directly with the land as a farmer and with people as an educator. I work at Airfield Estate, a farm and educational charity in Dublin that teaches people about our food system. Through working with Airfield's Youth Board, which is a group of volunteers aged 15 – 19 passionate about sustainable food system, as well as volunteering with the Irish Youth Food Forum, Dublin Food Coop, and Talamh Beo, I have become attuned to the clear desire for climate action from young people in Ireland.

The message is clear. When it comes to climate change, young people want action yesterday. We are tired of loose promises, 10-year goals, and failed commitments. We need concrete, effective, scaled-up actions today. Youth consultations, youth delegations and "meaningful youth participation" mean nothing if policymakers do not act. Young people are exhausted, because simply existing has become a political campaign for our basic rights. Teenagers now have to be "youth climate leaders" while also being children. Instead of spending time with friends, studying for their exams, and falling in love for the first time, they are stressed and anxious about having a livable future.

So, we beg you to step up, be brave, and be disruptive. That means long-term policymaking that thinks beyond the next election. We need a Future Generations Commissioner in Ireland to protect the interests of human and ecological well-being for both current and future generations. Your children's and grandchildren's future depends on you; **please support Coalition 2030's call for a Future Generations Commissioner.**

Secondly, I ask you to support Airfield's call for a National Food Literacy Strategy. We need to drastically rethink food and climate education in Ireland. Agriculture is the nation's leading sector in annual greenhouse gas emissions, yet the words 'Food' and 'Agriculture' are both mentioned only once in the new Leaving Cert subject on Climate Action and Sustainable Development. Research by our own Youth Board found that half of 16-30-year-olds in Ireland rated their age group as having little to no knowledge of the environmental impacts of the food system. We have a generation of young people who are disconnected from food production. Food literacy is a necessary life skill that **gives people the understanding to see how food**

connects climate, health, biodiversity and our communities – and how they can help protect them.

I ask the Committee to support progress on the Commission for Future Generations Bill, recognize food literacy as an essential part of climate education, and make climate action a priority across society.

Ultimately, this is about more than the future we want for ourselves. It is about the legacy we leave for those who come after us.

Thank you.