Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission on this issue. I am a minister of religion, living and working in Northern Ireland, but am writing as a private individual. In making this submission, may I please ask that the law on abortion in Northern Ireland be allowed to remain in place, for the following reasons:

1) Summary. The current abortion law should be retained on the grounds of democratic process; human rights and practical impact.

2) Democratic process. This law was re-affirmed by our local assembly as recently as February 2016.

3) Human Rights. It reflects a still widespread conviction about the fundamental human right - that of life - of the most vulnerable member of any society: the unborn child.

4) Impact. The Advertising Standards Agency has accepted that one hundred thousand people are alive today, because of our current law on abortion. This is in contrast to mainland Great Britain where nine million abortions have been performed since 1967. Of those abortions carried out carried out in 2016, ninety eight percent were for social reasons.

5) Conclusion. May I respectfully suggest that the abortion law in Northern Ireland, rather than being an historical anachronism, is a law which fundamentally protects human rights, by recognising that both lives matter: mother and child.

December 2018