Written submission from Mr Gary Fair (ANI0198)

I am very grateful for the opportunity to convey my views in response to the terms of reference of this Inquiry.

My answers are fairly brief as I only became aware that the Inquiry was in train earlier this week. It didn't appear to have been drawn to the attention of the wider public in Northern Ireland, so the number of responses that you receive may perhaps be less than might otherwise have been the case.

My comments in response to each of the questions posed are set out below.

- **What are the views of the general public, women and medical and legal professionals in Northern Ireland about the law on abortion and whether it should be reformed? How have those views changed over time?**

The will of our locally elected representatives is that the existing law on abortion should not be changed. It is my view therefore that Northern Ireland’s law must be respected and that Westminster should not set out to bypass this.

From a personal point of view I find it rather contradictory that anyone in a country (a country that is appropriately focused on the rights of individuals, including those of the most vulnerable in our society) considers it to be reasonable or appropriate to take the life of another human being before birth. Every effort is made by the health service to save the life of a premature baby, and yet the life of an unborn baby at the same stage of development can be willfully terminated.

I am all for women being treated with respect and having the freedom to make their own decisions about their lives. However, this freedom should not extend to making decisions about whether or not another human being should live or die. The rights of both the mother and child should have equal priority.

On a factual point, I find it particularly disturbing that, in 2016, about 98% of abortions in Great Britain were carried out for social reasons.

- **What are the experiences of women in Northern Ireland who have been affected by the law on abortion?**

I have no direct knowledge of this, other than what is reported in the media. What I do know is that an estimated 100,000 lives have been saved because of the existing law.

- **What are the responsibilities of the UK Government under its international obligations for taking action to reform abortion law in Northern Ireland? How should these be reconciled to the UK’s devolution settlement?**
As I have stated above, the will of our locally elected representatives is that the existing law on abortion should not be changed. This was last made clear in February 2016. It is my view therefore that Northern Ireland’s law must be respected and the Westminster should not set out to bypass this.

I hope that these brief comments will assist you in your consideration of this issue, although, if you feel it would be helpful, I would also be happy to meet with the Committee to discuss further.

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