As a resident of Northern Ireland (NI) (mother of five and grandmother of fourteen, formerly of considerable influence with children and young people mainly through education)

I would submit to the honourable committee that the existing law concerning and surrounding abortion in NI should be preserved, as voted by our elected representatives, as recently as February 2016.

Views are changing over time, as expressed by Eire, our ‘neighbour’! Formerly there was regard for the continuity of human life, with no distinction between pre and post birth. The detailed biological ‘knowledge’ was absent, but all adults recognised that from conception the developing ‘baby’ was protected and nurtured in its mother’s womb. It has regrettably always happened that some ‘babies’ abort naturally, mainly during the first trimester. Whereas prospective mothers should not have the ‘right’ to do this themselves, to ‘abort’/terminate/destroy…the baby in their own womb. I find it extremely concerning that currently many in society wish to change the existing law in NI so that women here may have the ‘right’ to choose to do this. Sadly, in today’s society, these two rights, the unborn and prospective mothers, are in direct conflict as a result of pressure groups advocating that the law be changed to permit the abortion of babies in much wider circumstances.

The basic human right to life should never change!

I am truly sorry that some women in NI have had bad and/or sad situations in relation to abortion, including the necessity of travelling ‘across the water’. However, I feel much more sympathetic to the defenceless and innocent babies that were aborted as a result of such experiences.

It seems to me that a just and fair society must always prioritise life over death.

I believe that morality and ethics should not be subject to the whims and moods of societal change. Just because something is apparently popular in other parts of the UK does not mean that it is moral, ethical or fair. Nor does it mean that the UK government has an obligation to conform NI within it’s international ‘obligations’. Why the necessity to ‘rush’ reform of the abortion law in NI, especially with the absence of government in Stormont. Subjective morality is a very dangerous guide. Just ask the Jews in Germany during WW2 or more recently those living under ISIS.

Shifts in popular opinion can occur as a result of pressure groups and media influence, which can often carry far more weight than they justify. Many ordinary people are scared to be found ‘out of step’ with media opinion, lest they be prejudicially labelled, ‘sexist’ or ‘racist’, for instance. The irony with this is of course that abortion may result in the death of many females, persons of ethnic minorities and in other parts of the world.

NI must not be overruled by Westminster in this matter. The abortion laws should remain a devolved matter. Others, in the UK government and other so called advanced nations can laugh and mock at NI as a ‘backwater’, if they wish, but I will sleep much easier knowing that
defenceless and innocent babies continue to have the right to life in NI. If the price to pay for this protection of the unborn is ridicule, from those who profess to know better, in the UK government, Republic of Ireland and the ‘international community’, I consider this inconsequential.

I know adults who enjoy life, despite being born with severe disabilities, who would not be alive today were it not for the existing law in NI. Do you in the Women and Equalities Commission have the right to value your life above theirs, or other ‘disabled’ who have been aborted in the UK? There are degrees of disability. Who is to decide the unborn who cannot live or those who are permitted to do so? The law on abortion should not be available as a tool to discriminate against the disabled, or on the grounds of sex of the unborn. If the law in NI is changed both of these will be available and as has happened in the rest of the UK, direct discrimination will occur. That this can be the case with defenceless and innocent babies makes the discrimination far worse.

I am informed that in 2016, 98% of abortions in Great Britain were carried out for social reasons. This is sad and truly shocking, a terrible indictment on today’s society. It is worthy of note too that regret and guilt may follow for some women who have chosen abortion, or have been pressured to abort. This mental impact should be considered, especially today when there is huge concern over mental health issues.

Ultimately almost all abortion scenarios could be avoided with the proper use of contraceptives, which through time have become widely available. This where a woman’s right over her own body should be focussed. Abortion should not be used as a contraceptive.

Finally I urge the Women and Equalities Commission to give equal rights the basic human right of life to the unborn.

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