Written submission from Andy Heber (ANI0476)

1) DEVOLUTION
I’m writing to express my views and some concerns too to the consultation on Abortion law in Northern Ireland. I am concerned that no one representing constituents in Northern Ireland has been included on the committee and am therefore concerned that the voice of Northern Ireland residents will not be heard. It is also disturbing that although our Assembly is suspended politicians in Westminster are seeking to influence laws in a devolved constituency despite recent polling proving that 64% of people in this country believe the decision should be taken by Northern Ireland’s elected politicians. Surely therefore this important issue should be decided by the Northern Ireland assembly in due course and not by politicians from another jurisdiction. This would set an alarming precedent I feel for other devolved assemblies.

2) DISTINCTIVE LAW AND CULTURE
The current law in Northern Ireland protects people who are disabled many of whom have gone on to live productive and loving lives, making a huge impact on society because they were not aborted. Whereas 90% of people with Down’s Syndrome in England, Scotland and Wales have had their lives ended by abortion, 90% of those with Down’s in Northern Ireland have been allowed to live and have contributed to our society. Nelson Mandela said that the health of a society is judged by how it treats its weakest members. On this definition Northern Ireland is indeed a healthy country! In addition recent research by the “Both lives matter” group has estimated that 100,000 people have had their lives saved due to the 1967 act not being adopted in this country. It is impossible to estimate the impact these people have had on society!

3) HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY
It has been suggested that the current law in Northern Ireland convenes human rights. Actually this view was expressed by only one un-elected committee and as Lord Wilson put it "the authority of the recommendation of the supreme court is slight" In my view it is both more humane and also shows more dignity to life to value the lives of both mother and baby rather than pitching them against each other and suggesting there has to be a winner.

4) PERSONAL STORIES
During the course of my ministry I have met so many people who have added quality to my own life and the lives of those around them often despite their disabilities. How sad it is to think that these people could have been denied the right to live if our laws on abortion in this country were different!
In addition I have met many who have been allowed to live because their parents made a bold decision to have their child. Very few of these parents have ever expressed to me their regret at allowing their child to live but conversely many who have made the difficult decision to abort their child are often struggling with the guilt and other implications of that decision years later.

In conclusion I would urge the committee to consider these views and allow this decision to be made by Northern Ireland’s own elected representatives and not by Westminster. In my view our current laws are humane and life giving and should be kept as such.

November 2018