1) DEVOLUTION
I am a woman in Northern Ireland, I am very thankful for the right to vote and by doing so, have my voice heard by those who represent me in government. I am extremely frustrated that our Northern Ireland Assembly is suspended at present but what makes me even more upset is the pressure that is being used by abortion activists to take advantage of our current lack of local government in order to bypass devolution and impose a change to our laws here in NI. This is a wholly devolved issue and it should be decided by politicians here in NI, not Westminster (supported by recent ComRes polling of NI adults that shows that 64% of people think that abortion should be decided by Northern Ireland’s elected representatives, rising to 66% of women and 70% of 18 to 34 year olds.) It is totally inappropriate, counter-productive and disrespectful for politicians in Westminster to take it upon themselves to speak for me, a Northern Irish woman, and say I want the law changed here. It completely undermines the democratic process, not only is it disrespectful to me, it is disrespectful to Northern Ireland, a country which in so many other areas seems like the bottom of the list when it comes to Westminster's priorities. I do not find it to be a coincidence that abortion is the one issue that has made MPs in London take notice of us. It is a disgrace that not one member of the Women and Equalities Committee represents a seat in Northern Ireland.

2) DISTINCTIVE LAW AND CULTURE
I am PROUD of our law here in Northern Ireland. It has been proven that it makes a difference - 100,000 people are alive in NI today because we didn't adopt the 1967 Abortion Act. This research was conducted by Both Lives Matter and upheld following a 5 month investigation by the Advertising Standards Authority who concluded that the 100,000 figure was reasonable. The law matters. Northern Ireland is now the safest place on these isles for a baby in the womb, especially when a disability is identified in utero. In England, Scotland and Wales, unborn babies can be aborted up to term in these cases. This is horrifying. In 2016, 90% of foetuses identified in utero to have Down's syndrome in England, Scotland and Wales were aborted. This was the complete opposite in Northern Ireland, where 90% of those foetuses diagnosed with Down's syndrome were born. This is something to CELEBRATE! In Northern Ireland, we don't discriminate against the disabled in the womb! THAT is equality.

3) HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY
As a woman, I am insulted by the notion that I am oppressed because I can't have a right to an abortion. ABORTION DOES NOT EMPOWER WOMEN. What is more empowering? To tell a woman that she has to choose between her child and her future? Or to tell her, no matter the circumstances, that she is strong enough to be a mother and anything else she wants to be. Women ARE strong and we are capable of so much more than what abortion activists would have us believe, in the name of feminism no less. WE HAVE BEEN SOLD A LIE WHEN WE BELIEVE THAT OUR FREEDOM IS BOUGHT WITH THE BLOOD OF OUR CHILDREN.
Recently, on two narrow points - of life limiting conditions and sexual crime - a number of Supreme Court Justices indicated that they think the law on abortion in Northern Ireland is incompatible with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, however, these comments are non-binding. Even if a binding ruling was made by a future court, these would only account for a tiny number of abortion cases in practice. In England and Wales, less than 2% of recorded abortions were granted on these grounds. The remaining 98% of abortions were carried out on healthy women carrying healthy babies. Apparently, the UN says that our laws in NI are not human rights compliant and that abortion should be decriminalised here but this doesn't refer to the view of the United Nations as a body. It refers to
a report issued by one, unelected, committee - the Committee for the Elimination of the Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The remit of the CEDAW is defined by the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and at NO point is abortion mentioned but some would have you believe that it has set out a right to abortion which Northern Ireland is failing to deliver - this just is not true.

CEDAW is a non-judicial body and Prof Mark Hill QC has pointed out it has no legal standing to read such a right into the Convention.

Members of the UK Supreme Court have also highlighted that the views of bodies such as the CEDAW are only of marginal relevance - in Lord Wilson’s words, “the authority of their recommendations is slight.”

I am asking the Women’s and Equalities Committee to be very careful whose recommendations they listen to and to PLEASE not accept the lie that women can only be equal when they have an absolute right to abortion in any circumstance for any reason. Pitching us against our unborn children and measuring our freedom, equality and progress by our ability to end the life of our unborn child is essentially what this does. Where is the humanity in that? It is a dangerous and destructive way to view women and humanity in general - that life is disposable. That pregnancy crisis can be dealt with by throwing away a human life. There are millions of people all around the world who see a better way ahead that values the life, health and dignity of both mother and unborn child as far as possible.

4) PERSONAL STORIES

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