1) DEVOLUTION
Dear Members of the Committee,

My wife and I are writing to you as citizens and lifelong residents of Northern Ireland about the very important subject of abortion in this country. We are both very concerned this matter is being discussed by a Committee in England of which no members represent anyone in Northern Ireland. We feel strongly that this is a matter to be decided upon by politicians in Northern Ireland, not Westminster. Whilst we are aware that the NI Assembly is not meeting right now, we feel it would very bad practice to interfere in relation to this very sensitive subject at such a time as this.

2) DISTINCTIVE LAW AND CULTURE
The current law on abortion in Northern Ireland has been proven to save lives. Research conducted by ‘Both Lives Matter’ in 2017 found that an estimated 100,000 individuals are alive today who otherwise would not be had Northern Ireland followed England, Scotland, and Wales in adopting the 1967 Abortion Act. Complaints were made to the Advertising Standards Authority about this claim but after a 5 months long investigation, the ASA concluded that the 100,000 figure was indeed reasonable. In addition, the law here protects individuals who are disabled from unjustified discrimination. In England, Scotland and Wales, unborn children can be aborted up to term if a disability is identified in utero. In Northern Ireland, this is not the case. This makes a major difference.

3) HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY
Although a number of Supreme Court Justices recently indicated that they think that on two narrow points, namely life-limiting conditions, and sexual crime, the law on abortion in Northern Ireland is incompatible with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, these comments were non-binding. Even if a future court made a binding ruling, the cases in question only engage a tiny number of abortion cases in practice. Less than 2% of recorded abortions in England and Wales were granted on these grounds. Anyhow, how does one horrendous sexual crime against a woman make it right to punish the innocent offspring of such a crime by destroying the baby’s life? Why not allow the baby to be born and then be adopted by loving parents who will care for it if the natural mother is not able to?

There is a danger that the Women’s and Equalities Committee accepts the view that women can only be equal when they have an absolute right to abortion in any circumstance for any reason. This, however, pitches a woman against her unborn child and measures their freedom, equality, and progress by their ability to end the life of their child. This is a dangerous and destructive way to view women and humanity more widely. Many women, men, and children see a better and more human way ahead which values the life, health, and dignity of both as far as possible.

4) PERSONAL STORIES
We personally know of a number of wonderful people with physical handicaps who are enjoying life and making real and meaningful contributions to society. Both we and they are so glad their lives were not snuffed out before they were born!

It cannot be right that the most dangerous place for a child today is in her mother’s womb!

Thank you for reading our submission.

December 2018