Written submission from Patricia Boyd (ANI0612)

1) DEVOLUTION
I respect that every time people go to the polls, in any of the Devolved Assemblies, they vote with their conscience and therefore their representatives need to be honest with the voters about their views on a matter of such a sensitive subject. In a recent ComRes poll of NI adults it revealed that 64% of people are of the opinion that abortion should be decided by our own elected MLAs (even though our Assembly is suspended at present. It is ironic that there is no representative from NI on the Women & Equalities Committee (saying a lot for Equality!) I am of the strong opinion that Stormont is the only place this issue of Life & Death should be debated and decided. Therefore I would appeal for the upholding of the democratic rights of the citizens in this part of the United Kingdom by not abusing the powers entrusted to a Committee of the House of Commons.

2) DISTINCTIVE LAW AND CULTURE
Living in Northern Ireland, where one has witnessed the misunderstanding and undervaluing of the life of the "other" resulting in many untimely & unnecessary deaths, I am proud to hear someone actually say in the House of Lords " the safest place in our United Kingdom to be diagnosed with a disability before birth in (here) NI" (Lord Shinkwin). I was appalled to hear during that same debate that 90% of babies identified to have Down's in GB were aborted (life was taken from them) in 2016 BUT rejoiced to hear that in NI 90% of those identified with the same were born. It is indeed a thing to be celebrated that we do not discriminate against a child in the womb. I fail to understand how in a civilised (so called) Society there are Women who would wish to introduce such discrimination or seek to impose such on us in NI against our wishes. Why would we want to be responsible for the potential loss of 100,000 human beings over the next 50 years by changing our law now. (based on research in 2017 that an estimated 100,000 people under 50 are alive in NI who would not be had we implemented the 1967 Abortion Act, a figure considered prudent by the ASA after 5month investigation)

3) HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY
Following on from my previous point I cannot understand why the above Committee would seek to decriminalise abortion on the grounds of the "recommendations" of another Committee for Discrimination against Women, considered by members of the UK Supreme court to be of only marginal relevance. Is there not a danger that the Commons Committee is buying into the lie that only way women can be equal is to be granted the absolute right to abortion for ANY reason. Surely as women we cannot want be measuring our freedom, progress and equality by our capacity to end the life of our own unborn child! Can we not be better than that, and as women see ourselves and humanity in a less vicious and threatening way? Why are we focused on the 2% of cases (in England & Wales), those of life limiting conditions & sexual crimes, (which may be considered incompatible with Article 8 of ECHR) instead of valuing the life, health & dignity both, and be champions for the cause of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society?

4) PERSONAL STORIES

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