1) DEVOLUTION
While Northern Ireland may not have a government presently, it would be totally inappropriate for a committee lacking completely in Northern Irish representatives to make such a crucial decision on an issue that is quite literally a matter of life and death. The laws in Northern Ireland are statistically proven to have saved hundreds of thousands of lives compared to the laws that have been imposed on the rest of the UK. It seems totally ludicrous that Northern Ireland should want to bring these laws upon themselves, never mind have them imposed by another committee who has absolutely no involvement with NI.

2) DISTINCTIVE LAW AND CULTURE
It is proven in looking at abortion figures in GB compared to Northern Ireland that a change in the law would directly impact the number of abortions taking place here. The laws in Northern Ireland are specifically designed to protect the most vulnerable who do not get a say and it is our responsibility to protect them. In GB, unborn children can be aborted up until 40 weeks if a disability its detected in the womb. However, in Northern Ireland, this is not an option. Lord Shinkwin recently said in the House of Lords that “Northern Ireland is the safest place in our United Kingdom to be diagnosed with a disability before birth”. It is only right that we continue to stand up for those with disabilities, such as Lord Shinkwin, as people who are suffering from disabilities are still capable of living a normal life. This is reiterated in the statistics stating that 90% of unborn children with Down’s Syndrome are aborted, in contrast to the 90% of them who live in Northern Ireland.

In a culture that is so focused on celebrating diversity and acceptance, how can it be fair to terminate pregnancies based on a disability diagnosed in the womb?

3) HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY
A common argument for unrestricted abortion in Northern Ireland is for cases of sexual crime and fatal foetal abnormality. However, in England and Wales only 2% of abortions take place for these reasons. It is clear from this figure that a change in the law would open the floodgates to abortion on demand for all circumstances, including children who are simply unwanted.

Another argument is the view of feminism and human rights. It is often argued that it is against human rights for a woman to carry a child against her wishes. However, if women are supposed to be in control of their own bodies, why are unborn foetuses not entitled to this same human right? Why should it be okay to terminate unborn children (female and male) when they get no choice? In a culture longing for equality, why is a born human somehow more equal than an unborn human? These are all vital questions that must be asked as they challenge the biggest issues our society is striving for.

4) PERSONAL STORIES
As a 20-year-old woman, I am surrounded by people of my generation striving for a "modern", "accepting", "neutral" and "equal" society. Despite all these adjectives sounding appealing, they are changing the world in a way that is rewriting the long-accepted fundamentals of human life. In terms of the abortion debate, it has always been accepted that life is valued yet in striving for a culture of equality, someone is going to lose - in this case, the unborn child.

As someone who has always wanted children and foresees starting a family in the next 5-10 years, the last thing I want to face as a prospective parent is the pressure of society (and perhaps eventually the law) telling me whether or not my unborn child has a right to live. If abortion on demand were to be legalised and my child were to be diagnosed with a life-limiting condition in the
womb (or equivalent), I want to be able to carry my child as far as possible without being told otherwise by someone who has absolutely no involvement with my body or my personal life. By legalising abortion for all, I believe the pressures of carrying a child to term in these scenarios would be significantly greater.

In cases where abortion may be considered, I believe we should be putting funding into counselling and education on other options in the best interests of both mother and baby. Abortion should only be considered as a very last resort where all other avenues has been explored, just as the law in NI currently stands. I believe that by introducing abortion on demand, there will be a societal pressure on mothers to abort immediately in cases outside of the norm.

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