

As a resident of N.Ireland I am writing to give my view on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill that was introduced in the Assembly by Clare Bailey in September.

Whilst Ms. Bailey's intentions may be to help women with this new Bill, I feel it would be a backward step for democracy and free speech in our province. I also feel that creating these buffer zones outside of these clinics would cut off the last chance of these women hearing an alternative narrative to abortion. Many women who plan to go for an abortion are in two minds over the matter and are only given one side of the story – that it's easiest to go through with this procedure rather than go through with the pregnancy. The people who stand outside these clinics, praying and handing out literature do this (normally) in a non-judgmental and peaceful manner. Surely it is no bad thing to give a person an alternative to the path that they have chosen. A path that many women later deeply regret. If a person is absolutely certain about going through with an abortion and believe this to be the best thing for them, then a small group of people peacefully standing outside the clinic will not deter them from this path.

Another concern is about the effect that this will have on free speech and democracy in this province. Because if you stop this then we should also stop 'striking' workers standing outside of their places of employment as this would intimidate those going in to work. These striking workers holding placards who stand outside schools, hospitals, public buildings and other places, could often be said to be more intimidatory than a small group of pro-lifers handing out a few leaflets.

I hope that when you consider this seemingly 'well intentioned' bill proposed by Ms. Bailey, you would bear in mind the long-term negative consequences that will come out of this bill if passed.