

I am writing to place on record my objections to the "Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill" introduced by that was introduced in the Assembly by Clare Bailey. I, like the majority of people in Northern Ireland, take a pro life view and believe that children in the womb should be protected. As such I object strongly to the provision of abortion on demand services to Northern Ireland and the increasing ease of access to abortion. I also support the right to free speech and to meet in public to express a viewpoint or to conduct prayer. Additionally, I support the right of women who are hesitant about abortion to seek counselling about alternatives, even if that is only available outside the abortion clinic. Indeed often the alternatives to abortion are kept from women in crises until this point.

Those supporting the bill are ignoring the fact that all of these gatherings outside abortion clinics have been peaceful and are generally silent, offering support to anyone who wishes to avail of it. Pro Life vigils aim to save lives. There is no evidence of law breaking or criminal behaviour or harassment from these vigils.

The bill is clearly ideologically motivated by pro abortionists and their friends in the abortion industry. It has been worded to be vague, so much so that a breach can be interpreted as any activity conducted outside an abortion clinic. Indeed, a sideways look could be interpreted as enough to "influence a person's decision to attend". This level of control and repression is not appropriate in a free and democratic society.

I note that the bill is singling out people with a viewpoint that differs to the pro abortion lobby. This is what extremists do; they try to silence opposition. Those against abortion on demand include anyone of a sincere Christian or Islamic faith, both of which recognise that life begins in the womb in their scriptures. It also breaches the right to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, both protected under Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act.

I urge you to reject this bill on democratic principle, free expression of views and human rights grounds.