

Current Harassment Law is not adequate

Current legislation on Harassment requires two or more occasions to make the legal threshold. While the behaviour of protesters outside healthcare providers may constitute harassment, different individuals may approach a patient to avoid meeting the legal threshold

Free Speech is a qualified right

Free speech and freedom of assembly are both qualified rights they must be balanced with others rights for example in relation to laws against his speech and defamation.

This bill would only restrict these rights in a delineated access zones which are not a space for political lobbying but areas outside healthcare providers.

This bill would not restrict antichoice protests outside of safe access zones.

Safe access zones are a proportionate response to balance the rights to free speech and assembly and the rights to private life and health.

Human Rights

There is a binding duty on the NI Secretary of State to fully implement CEDAW's 2018 recommendation to the UK Government to "protect women from harassment from anti-abortion protestors by investigating complaints, prosecuting and punishing perpetrators" which is contained in S9 Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019

To fail to provide safe access zones may constitute further human rights breaches as this could make lawful abortion prohibited in practice.

Protesters will also use words such as 'murder' and 'kill' this language is particularly distressing for those who are terminating a much wanted pregnancy after receiving a severe or fatal foetal impairment diagnosis.

Often clinic protests are accompanied by graphic images, these are particularly distressing for people who have experienced a miscarriage.