

Dear Health Committee,

Please find attached evidence in support of Paul Givan MLA Bill regarding the amendment proposed to Abortion Law in Northern Ireland.

I trust you will give this due consideration.

Dear Health Committee,

I am writing on behalf of those, yet unborn, who on the grounds of 'severe fetal impairment' will potentially lose their lives in a most disturbing way and for unjustifiable reasons in my opinion.

I recently conducted a funeral service of a fantastic man with Downs Syndrome, who lived to the ripe old age of 61 years (even though it was thought he might only live 30 years). This man lived a full and wonderful life. He got to see places and meet people most of us might never see or meet; had a great sense of humour and was the longest serving member in our local McDonalds, serving for 10 years!

I have conducted many funerals over the years and sad to say that on numerous occasions families gave me very little to speak about their loved (or not so loved or loving) ones. Contrast that with the funeral of the gentleman in question and we could have spent far more time than allowed to speak about the impact he had on many, many people. He was and is not alone regarding the full and vibrant life many with Downs and other impairments get to enjoy and live.

I really cannot comprehend how legislation can allow for the abortion of real, living, human babies irrespective of their 'impairment' that in reality for so many brings so much joy.

Yes, I write this as a local clergyman but also as a dad to a son (now 20 years old) with Tourettes Syndrome and ASD. He is such a gifted

young man who is now contemplating becoming self-employed in the field of Conceptual Art, following 3 years study at a local College.

Has his life been easy? No! Has he faced many challenges and been treated abusively and negatively by peers over the years? Yes! Yet, he is a joy to his mother, younger sister and me.

Now, some might say that his is an impairment not seen in the womb but what if it were possible at some stage in the future to see it? Might legislation be proposed to include children similar to our son as well! We need to think seriously and very carefully about the kind of society we are in danger of becoming and surely there is enough history familiar to us all that should make us want to guard all the more against determining which group of people gets the right to live and which doesn't.

Part of what made the gentleman with Down's life so enjoyable and full was the wonderful support he received from family and groups within society driven to make his and others quality of life as good as it was. This is what we should all want!

For these and many other others reasons I most strongly want to endorse the Bill introduced by Paul Givan MLA on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021, that the 'Abortion (Northern Ireland) (N0.2) Regulations 2020 be amended to remove the grounds for an abortion in cases of 'severe fetal impairment'.