

26.04.2021

The Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill
A response to the call for evidence by the Health Committee

Dear Mr. McBride,

I would like to register my complete support for the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill as introduced by Paul Givan MLA and as supported in principle by a clear majority in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

It is utterly inconsistent and unjust, in law and in experience, to promote equality of access for people living with disability on the one hand and cut short their life in the womb—essentially assenting to their murder—with the other. The mixed message this gives to disabled people is unfair and a further mountain for them to overcome.

We regularly see presenters on TV functioning as reporters, conducting interviews and hosting gameshows, many of whom have mobility issues. This being the case there is no foundation to deny life and a chance to succeed to those with a cleft palate or club foot.

I have direct experience, both actual and anecdotal, of the positive and special contribution which individuals with Down's Syndrome bring to the classroom and to the church community: as I even now recall their faces, I see an unconscious ability to break down social barriers, an ease in expressing affection (often with great sensitivity), enthusiasm in worship, faithfulness in helping and uninhibited joy. Such people cause us to examine our own attitudes and actually provoke us to become better people in a way that "perfect" human beings do not. These voiceless infants in the womb deserve to have legal protection in Northern Irish society in the twenty-first century. And parents and families deserve to have the best level of care and support from society as they, and we, play our part in bringing them up.

I write as one of the "decent" people of Northern Ireland: a single woman and former teacher.