

FAO: Mr Robin Swann & Health Committee

Dear Mr Swann

Concerning the above Bill and the Second Reading, I would like to submit my concerns as evidence.

I have two aspects to this.

1. I have a 32 yr old niece, [REDACTED], who has Downs. She lives a full life and holds down not one job but three part time jobs. She acts, she dances, she has a boyfriend, [REDACTED], who also has Downs. So Downs is personal to our family. When [REDACTED] was born, people used to stop my brother and his wife in the street and ask 'what were they going to do with her?'. The suggestion being, putting [REDACTED] in Muckamore was the answer. [REDACTED] parents did a lot of work with her when she was younger and often, parents given the news that they were carrying a child with Downs, were introduced to [REDACTED] to give them a hopeful outlook. Aborting children in the womb with Downs is discriminatory and it affects the lives of those already born with Downs. I am supporting this Bill for these reasons.

2. I have personal experience of abortion in my own life. For the past 20 years, I have been involved in ministering to those affected by abortion and that includes the mother of the baby, the father, grandparents, friends, co workers, siblings, extended families and so on. It is estimated that the ripple effect of each abortion can affect up to 45 people. All those people are in our communities. Post Abortion Trauma is very real and has symptoms similar to PTSD. These include anniversary triggers, sights, smells, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts/ideation/attempts, self harming, drug/alcohol/food abuse, nightmares, inability to bond with future children, domestic violence, relationship breakdowns, and so it goes on. Abortion has long-term, detrimental effects - physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. Abortion grief over our children is a forbidden grief and so we don't talk about it and often do not seek help. My concern is also that, in my experience of working both in Belfast and in London, the grief surrounding women who abort for foetal abnormalities, is far more complex and layered. It is the most difficult grief to counsel.

Our mental health services are stretched to the limit and are probably well beyond that. With the history of the Troubles and many people seeking mental health help, adding in to that mix, women who abort, I know that they will not get the help they need. One area of research done in Finland (a very liberal country when it comes to abortion) showed that women who aborted children were 5 times more likely to take their own life through suicide than women who carried their children to term in the same 10 year study. This was simply a health study of maternal health and not one seeking to make a pro life/pro choice point. We should take note of that figure.

I don't agree with abortion in any situation. Medical treatment to 'save the life of the mother' is not abortion. In that instance, both mother and child are patients and in certain situations, in order to

save mum, the baby may die. That is not abortion. The baby is delivered (age appropriate) and parents can say goodbye, take photos, have a funeral and a natural grieving process follows. Abortion is the deliberate destruction of the child for the sole purpose of destroying that child. I certainly don't agree with how abortion legislation has come in to NI, against the will of the people. But, I support this Bill so that we can at least protect the human rights of some children in any way we can and limit the damage of abortion on our society.