

Dear Members of the Health Committee:

I am making this submission to the Committee in support of the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

The experiences which compel me to write to you are three-fold:

1. I am the parent of a 42-year-old daughter with cerebral palsy from birth, completely unable to do any single thing for herself. She is the light of our lives.
2. My brother and his wife have a 27-year-old daughter with Down's Syndrome. She is similarly precious to them.
3. I have been involved in interdenominational youth work fulltime for the past 49 years, working with every possible kind of young person, able-bodied and otherwise.

The Northern Ireland Assembly has made it clear that it opposed a law change that would single out people with non-fatal disabilities.

Nevertheless:

Following Heidi's call for Stormont to do everything it could to oppose abortion on the basis of disability up until birth, the Northern Ireland Assembly passed a motion opposing the extreme regulations that have been imposed on the province by the UK Government. (<https://righttolife.org.uk/news/northern-ireland-assembly-votes-to-reject-westminster-imposed-abortion-regulations/>)

- Across the two votes held, 75 out of 90 MLAs voted against the provisions in the regulations allowing abortion for non-fatal disabilities (<http://bit.ly/NIVotes>)

- Sadly, the UK Government ignored the vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly and went ahead with imposing a new regime that effectively introduced abortion up to birth for babies with disabilities including Down's syndrome, cleft lip and club foot.

I plead with the Honourable Members of the Health Committee to take seriously the views of those with first-hand experience of raising a child (or more than one) with severe disability. I challenge you to publish even one letter from such a parent expressing the wish that they had aborted their child when they had the chance. I doubt there is such a parent in the country.

If the law allows abortion for such disabilities as are suggested, we in Northern Ireland will move in one gigantic leap from being a people with a reputation for loving, protecting and valuing those human beings in our society least able to make a contribution, to being a barbaric, pragmatic, soul-less, value-less, eugenics-practicing labour camp, differing little in philosophy and only a little in barbarism from the

Third Reich of the last century.

Surely, for God\'s sake and our own, we must be better than that.