

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

In this submission I have outlined the key reasons why there urgently needs to be a change in the law as proposed by the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

I have Cystic Fibrosis, one of the severe conditions on which abortion up to birth is allowed in England Wales and Scotland.

I vehemently reject this law in the as it clearly discriminates against what are considered protected characteristics when one is born. I am glad I live in a society that protects my civic and societal rights now I am in existence. However the I feel grossly discriminated against and undervalued in society because of this law.

I support the proposed bill as it affords people like me and other disabilities the same rights and value as everyone else. It also protects parents from the unquestionable stigma and pressure to abort on the grounds of disability. The only characteristic where abortion up to birth is allowed. No other charactersitic can be selected as a reason for abortion.

Similar legislation in England, Wales and Scotland has resulted in people with disabilities being unjustly and disproportionately targeted

- The latest available figures show that 90% of children diagnosed with Down's syndrome before birth are aborted in England and Wales (http://www.binocar.org/content/annrep2013_FINAL.pdf).
- In 2019 alone, 3,183 babies with disabilities were aborted in England and Wales (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/891405/abortion-statistics-commentary-2019.pdf).
- The BBC's Victoria Derbyshire Show recently reported that a mother expecting a child with Down's syndrome was offered an abortion at 38 weeks' gestation (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-51612884>).

The current abortion regulations undermine 30 years of disability protection and fighting for equality in Northern Ireland

- Attitudes towards disability have changed profoundly in the past 30 years, as reflected in the legislation that has been passed in this area: the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 all aim to advance equality and introduce legal provisions against disability discrimination in Northern Ireland. These laws reflect the fact that every person, regardless of ability, is of value and worth.
- The experiences of individuals and their families in other parts of the UK, where disability selective

abortions have been in place for over thirty years, demonstrate that such stereotypes and inadequacies in support are inevitable when laws are in place that make a distinction between unborn babies with a disability and those without.

- The Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill will help foster equality by upholding the rights of the unborn with disabilities and reinforcing the understanding that every person in Northern Ireland deserves equality and respect.

The current abortion regulations are discriminatory and this Bill aims to combat this.