

I am writing to you on behalf of the Public Morals Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The Reformed Presbyterian Church has had a separate existence in Ireland for over 250 years and currently has 36 congregations in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The clerk to the committee for Justice has written to our Church seeking responses on the public consultation for the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (further provisions and support for victims) Bill.

Let me begin by expressing our support for efforts to counter the pernicious evil of the trafficking of men, women and children. We believe that it is the duty of Civil Government to act decisively against those wrongdoers (Romans 13.4).

We offer the following comments.

Firstly, we support the introduction of aggravating factors to be taken into consideration when sentencing (Clauses 3,4).

The bill proposes criminalising the client in all cases where sexual services are paid for . We propose that both the client and the prostitute should be liable to prosecution in the normal process of prostitution.

We believe that organised crime makes use of some persons from other jurisdictions who are willing participants in criminal acts. We are concerned that Clause 8 may place the burden of proof on the prosecution and thereby block on the proper prosecution of Foreign Nationals who have engaged in criminal behaviour. A defence of coercion is already available to persons who have committed criminal acts under threat of violence.

S.Drennan (Mr.)

The Convener

Committee on Public Morals

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

560 Doagh Road

Newtownabbey

BT36 5BU