

To whom it may concern,

I am strongly opposed to the fundamentally flawed "Abortion Services Safe Access Zones Bill"

Freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are fundamental human rights – both are protected under Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act.

As I understand it, the Bill will "...make it a CRIME to DO ANYTHING..." outside an abortion centre "...which might influence a person in their decision to attend..." an abortion centre. Simply holding a sign; distributing information leaflets; talking to a woman to offer her help, or even praying outside an abortion centre will be "...punishable on conviction by fines..." up to £2500.

This is completely discriminatory against pro life views - or are we going to make it a crime to speak out against racism, political corruption, ecological destruction, exploitation of women (which abortion is), and to offer assistance/charity to the homeless?

The only reason someone would want a censorship law is to stifle what they don't want to hear. Abortion is inherently unsafe for women and children and society. As a person with pro-life views I want what is best for women and children and I have the right, in a civilised society, to try to persuade. Anyone who wants what is best for society should be interested in respectful dialogue.

The bill appears to be based on the premise that people should be able to silence others if they don't want to hear something. It also is based on the false premise that pro life activists are abusive to those who are going in to a building which is offering abortions. If anyone has ever been abusive in these situations, it is so rare that I haven't heard of it. If it actually happens, the law as it stands is perfectly appropriate to deal with such an eventuality. There is no Police evidence to substantiate Claire Bailey's claims of 'harassment' and 'intimidation' outside abortion centres.

Abortion takes away incentive to provide real support to women with their pregnancy.

"These 'Abortion Zones' will rob vulnerable women of an alternative to abortion. Pro-Life groups have evidence of many women offered help and support outside abortion centres, who decided to keep their babies."

"The establishment and reviewing of so-called Safe Access Zones could impose costs on the Department of Health. Two similar zones in England have cost the taxpayer an estimated £150,000 and £250,000. These costs imposed on the public purse were in relation to legal costs incurred from resisting appeals to convictions. This Bill admits that it is reasonable to assume that the majority of costs imposed on the Department of Health in Northern Ireland will arise from enforcement and legal costs. The Health Service in Northern Ireland is already in crisis due to lack of funding. Taxpayers' money could be better spent on treating people who are on 10 year waiting lists for treatment, rather than adding more financial burdens to the Health Service by needlessly trying to set up and enforce 'abortion zones'."