

5 May 2021

The Health Committee Clerk
Room 419
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BT4 3XX

SEVERE FETAL IMPAIRMENT ABORTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to the Health Committee's recent call for evidence in relation to the above Bill. Just a few days ago the media reported pioneering fetal surgery performed in the womb for spina bifida, involving 25 clinicians from Great Ormond Street Hospital and University College London Hospitals, as well as University Hospitals Leuven in Belgium, where the surgery was conducted (<https://www.livescience.com/spina-bifida-surgery-in-womb-case.html>). The child was born six weeks ago, and is reported as being healthy and developing well. I could not help but be struck by the contrast between the commendable heroic efforts of these surgeons to improve the quality of this child's life after birth, and the current abortion legislation here in Northern Ireland, which would have permitted her to be aborted on the grounds of disability.

It is my view that all life is sacred, and that abortion is morally reprehensible and a violation of the most basic human right of all, the right to life. The current legislation as we have it in Northern Ireland is particularly pernicious in that it discriminates against the disabled, the weakest and most vulnerable in our society. If we were to discriminate against a child on the grounds of disability, quite rightly we would be open to prosecution under the law. Yet under our current legislation we could abort this same child before birth. This is nothing more than eugenics by another name. If we do not amend our legislation, in time we will find ourselves living in a society without Down's Syndrome, cystic fibrosis, and other disabling conditions. Is this the sort of Northern Ireland we would wish to live in? What sort of message does this convey regarding the value we put on those who have to live with disability?

Our current legislation as it stands is incompatible with the very basis of a civilised and inclusive society. I would therefore urge you to support the proposed amendment, as it seeks to correct this serious injustice.