

Ms Christine Darrah
Clerk to the Committee for Justice
Room 242
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

17th September 2014

Dear Ms Darrah,

In response to the Justice Committee's call for evidence on the Criminal Justice Bill and the Proposed Amendments, Precious Life launched the **Project Justice Campaign**. This campaign gave the people of Northern Ireland an opportunity to show their support for Mr Jim Wells MLA's proposed amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill and its prohibition of commercial provision of abortion 'services' in Northern Ireland. Precious Life produced thousands of submission postcards outlining the responder's support for Mr Wells' amendment. These postcards were distributed in churches and communities throughout Northern Ireland.

On behalf of the people of Northern Ireland, Precious Life is pleased to present to the Justice Committee **22,000 signed postcards**, in addition, we also present **1,048 submission sheets**, urging the Justice Committee to adopt Mr Wells' proposed amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill, and ensure that the *Marie Stopes* centre in Belfast, or any private abortion facility, does not perform abortions in Northern Ireland. We also present **6,302 signatures** collected as part of our CitizenGO campaign. I have included a photo-shot of the online CitizenGO petition.

Yours sincerely,



Bernadette Smyth
Director
Precious Life



POLSKI ITALIANO DEUTSCH FRANÇAIS ENGLISH
ESPAÑOL PORTUGUÊS PORTUGUÊS **ABOUT US**

PETITION TO: THE COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

I support Mr Jim Wells MLA's proposed amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill

*...because
life is a right,
not a privilege.*



Project Justice
For more postcards please contact Precious Life on 028 9027 8484



By Precious Life - 08/12/2014

Petition to: The Committee for Justice of the Northern Ireland Assembly

Dear Justice Committee Clerk,

The right to life is unconditional and all children deserve to be protected before as well as after birth. I want unborn children and their mothers protected from abortion, and state that I am totally opposed to the Marie Stopes centre in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly support Mr Jim Wells MLA's proposed amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill and its prohibition of commercial provision of abortion 'services'.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

Ms Christine Darrah
Clerk to the Committee for Justice
Room 242
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Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

17th September 2014

Dear Ms Darrah,

I, Bernadette Smyth, am writing on behalf of Precious Life, the leading prolife group in Northern Ireland, in response to the Justice Committee's call for evidence on the Criminal Justice Bill and the Proposed Amendments. Since 1997 Precious Life has worked tirelessly to protect Northern Ireland's unborn children through activism in the Northern Ireland Assembly, the courts, and on the streets. Through our many lobby campaigns, education outreaches and counselling services, we have saved many babies and their mothers from the horror of abortion.

I am writing in regard to Mr Jim Wells MLA's proposed amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill. I wish to state from the outset of this submission that Precious Life fully supports Mr Wells' proposed amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill.

Abortion in Northern Ireland is a criminal offence, governed by sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act and section 25 of the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1945. There is a defence which may be raised; that the abortion was performed to save the life of the pregnant woman or to prevent a real and serious adverse effect on her physical or mental health. This defence is not automatic and depends on the circumstances of the act carried out. The sole purpose of the above legislative provisions is the protection of the unborn child. Mr Wells' proposed amendment makes clear that a defence to the criminal charge of abortion would not be available to anyone who performed an abortion for a fee at a private medical centre. The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that private medical centres, such as the *Marie Stopes* centre which opened its doors in Belfast in October 2012, cannot legally carry out abortions in Northern Ireland. A private abortion facility's sole purpose is to destroy unborn children and its sole interest is profit. *Marie Stopes*' professed mission is 'children by choice not chance'. However, the law in Northern Ireland ensures that every human being, born and unborn, has a right to life; a right not to be intentionally killed. As stated above, Precious Life wants unborn babies and their mothers protected from abortion, and is therefore totally opposed to the *Marie Stopes* centre, or any private abortion facility, in Northern Ireland. Precious Life wholeheartedly supports Mr Wells' proposed amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill and its prohibition of commercial provision of abortion 'services' in Northern Ireland.

I would like to address to the Justice Committee a number of concerns regarding *Marie Stopes* or any private abortion facility in Northern Ireland.

***Marie Stopes* or any other private abortion facility is not needed in Northern Ireland**

It has been widely reported that both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, at least, before the enactment of the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013, are among the safest places for women to give birth. Over the forty years of legalised abortion in Britain there has been a consistent pattern in which higher abortion rates have run parallel to higher incidence of stillbirths, premature births, low birth-weight neonates, cerebral palsy, and maternal deaths as sequelae of abortion. In contrast, according to a research paper in 2012 by Byron Calhoun, John Thorp and Patrick Carroll, both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have displayed lower rates of all morbidities and mortality associated with legalised abortion. The law in Northern Ireland ensures pregnant women receive world-class medical care because both the mother and unborn child are treated as patients. In difficult cases where the mother's life is in danger, she and her unborn child receive the best obstetric care as has always been the case in Northern Ireland.

Marie Stopes proudly professes to be the UK's leading provider of sexual and reproductive healthcare services. However, abortion should not be understood as a 'health service', a 'treatment' for a physical or mental condition, as it is in fact the deliberate killing of an unborn child. It must be understood that there are no medical conditions when the life of a pregnant woman can only be saved by abortion. Operations, treatments, and medications that have as their direct purpose the cure of a proportionately serious pathological condition of a pregnant woman are legally permissible when they cannot be safely postponed until the unborn child is viable, even if they will result in the death of the unborn child. If through careful treatment of the pregnant woman's pathological condition the unborn child inadvertently dies or is injured, this is tragic and, if unintentional, is not unethical and not a criminal offence.

In order to determine the appropriate treatment of suicidality in a pregnant woman, one must turn to the evidence provided by consultant psychiatrists with extensive experience in caring for patients who are suicidal and pregnant women with mental health problems. When suicide does occur in pregnancy, it is in the context of mental illness. A suicide risk assessment must be carried out when a pregnant woman threatens suicide and this will determine the appropriate care plan. Appropriate treatment involves psychological intervention, nursing, social support, and perhaps medication as indicated by the needs outlined in the case history and examination of the patient. According to Professor Patricia Casey, a professor of psychiatry at the University College Dublin, in her submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children in May 2013, there is no evidence that abortion is a treatment for suicidal intent. In fact, to offer an abortion to a distressed woman, who is psychiatrically ill, is seriously ill advised since the woman's capacity to make such a life-changing decision is frequently impaired. Moreover, those with previous mental health problems are at an increased risk of relapse, both immediately and in the long term, post-abortion. It is important to stress that preserving the pregnant woman's safety is done by care, support and psychological and pharmacological interventions; not by the killing of her unborn child.

As stated above, in difficult cases where the mother's life is in danger, she and her unborn child receive the best obstetric care as has always been the case in Northern Ireland. *Marie Stopes* or any private abortion facility is not offering or providing any treatment that cannot be ethically and legally provided by the NHS free of charge. Pregnant women in Northern Ireland do not need *Maries Stopes* or any private abortion facility to receive necessary treatment and care. As Mr Edwin Poots, the Northern Ireland Health Minister, stated, 'there are no cases of women dying in Northern Ireland'.

Lack of transparency and accountability

In a meeting with the Justice Committee on 10th January 2013, representatives of the *Marie Stopes* centre in Belfast failed to provide a detailed explanation of how pregnant women are medically assessed in order to determine whether an abortion can be performed 'to save the life of the pregnant woman or to prevent a real and serious adverse effect on her physical or mental health'. The representatives failed to defend how *Marie Stopes'* healthcare professionals could hold an honest belief, and have reasonable grounds to believe, that abortion was necessary to save a pregnant woman's life or to prevent injury to her physical or mental. Alarming, Dawn Purvis, the Programme Director of the *Marie Stopes* centre in Belfast, when questioned by the chairperson of the Justice Committee, admitted that there is nothing to stop the *Marie Stopes* centre in Belfast from carrying out abortions right up to birth. There appears to be no accountability for 'services' provided by the *Marie Stopes* centre in Belfast. Although it has registered with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), the RQIA has no control over the clinical judgements of the healthcare professionals at *Marie Stopes* and has no role in ensuring that abortions are carried out 'within the legal framework'.

Precious Life's concern that *Marie Stopes* will not be providing pregnant women with the medical treatment and care that they need is amplified by *Marie Stopes'* association with reported deaths of numerous women. In 2007 a fifteen year old girl died five days after an abortion at a *Marie Stopes* centre in Leeds. She was supposed to have been given antibiotics to combat infection after the procedure but she never received the medication and died of a heart attack. In 2011 a doctor perforated the uterus of a woman and left parts of the baby inside her after an abortion at a *Marie Stopes* centre in London. He was later struck off the medical register. In 2012 a woman travelled from the republic of Ireland to have an abortion at a *Marie Stopes* centre in London. She died in a taxi hours after the procedure. She is said to have suffered a heart attack caused by extensive internal blood loss. In June 2014, three nurses were arrested in relation to the death of a young girl after an abortion at a *Marie Stopes* centre in Uganda. She died of excessive bleeding.

It has been reported that *Marie Stopes* has performed illegal abortions all over the world, including South Sudan, Zambia and Kenya. In 2007 Paul Cornelliison, the then *Marie Stopes International* Programme Director, admitted at an abortion conference in London that *Marie Stopes* 'do illegal abortions all over the world'. Since its opening in Belfast in October 2012, *Marie Stopes* has sought to challenge our pro-life laws in Northern Ireland. It appears that *Marie Stopes* does not wait for the law to change, but brazenly opens its doors in a country where abortion is illegal with the objective to soften individual consciences and gradually render the country's pro-life laws unenforceable in preparation for a widespread push for legalised abortion.

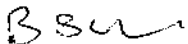
There must be accountability, transparency and an open working relationship between healthcare providers and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Healthcare professionals need to account for their decisions, explain exactly what was done to save the life of an aborted child and why that was not possible. Precious Life and wider society have reason to believe that such accountability, transparency and an open working relationship with the Department of Health is not welcomed by the *Marie Stopes* centre in Belfast. Without these safeguards, pregnant women in Northern Ireland are vulnerable to exploitation and exposed to physical, emotional and psychological harm, and unborn children in Northern Ireland will be afforded no protection.

Precious Life urges the Justice Committee to adopt Mr Wells' proposed amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill, and ensure that the *Marie Stopes* centre in Belfast, or any private abortion facility, does not perform abortions in Northern Ireland. As explained above, pregnant women in Northern Ireland do not need *Maries Stopes* or any private abortion facility to receive necessary treatment and care. Considering that abortion is the deliberate killing of an unborn child, a cold and costly, direct and wrong social solution to the troubles faced by a vulnerable pregnant woman, one can appreciate why Britain falls below Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland's standards of maternal health. *Marie Stopes'* rhetoric of 'children by choice not chance' does not serve women's needs or best interests, but only dupes them into believing that the choice to pay for highly skilled hands to eradicate the existence of their unborn children is what they deserve.

With loving care, support and appropriate medical treatment, every pregnant woman should be comforted and assured that she is not alone to cope with her pregnancy and the birth of her child. Abortion is never the solution to an unplanned pregnancy, and *Marie Stopes* or any private abortion facility will never be wanted or needed in Northern Ireland.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.

Yours sincerely,



Bernadette Smyth

Director
Precious Life