

Thursday, 26th September, 2019

To whom it may concern:

We the undersigned wish to make known our opposition to the imminent introduction of abortion in Northern Ireland. We are a group of 911 Doctors, Nurses, Midwives and other Health and Social Care Workers who are deeply concerned about these changes and wish to have our concern noted publicly. Our concern throughout is for pregnant mothers and their unborn children. We wish to protest and speak out for the following reasons, as our consciences demand that we not be silent:

1. It is well recognised and accepted scientifically that fertilisation of an egg brings about a new human life. This individual bears a new and permanent genetic code throughout their life, until his or her death. It is strongly held throughout the Western world that this human life is valuable and precious from conception, through birth, life and unto death, independent of that person's health, ability, race, sex or religious beliefs. This has also been the opinion of the majority of the health professions for as long as these professions have been recognised, until very recently, and remains the strongly held opinion of many of us at the present time. It is this position which enables us to excel in our work, and to treat our patients with true compassion, alleviating suffering and working for health from the earliest moment that life is recognised, until the final moment when it fails. The concept of taking a human life at any stage is inimical to us, and the concept of taking a human life in the womb especially so.
2. We believe that the best possible form of care for pregnant mothers and their unborn children is compassion and provision, best supplied within the supportive network of a family and a community, with the minimal medical input necessary to monitor and reassure. When things go wrong, we support the provision of timely and professional care. We would appeal to our politicians to actively promote strong families and strong communities, and to enact policies which would provide stable homes in which to raise children; we also appeal for adequate funding for community and hospital-based obstetrics services. The evidence throughout the UK over the past decades has been that societal reasons are by far the leading cause of abortion - using medical means to deal with societal problems does not work, has been shown not to work by the huge increase in abortions, and should not be used. We accept that, in a vanishingly small group of patients, abortion may be needed to save the life of the mother - legislation already exists to this end, and the infrequency of its use speaks for itself. Abortion, on the whole, is an unnecessary medical act, performed on someone who is not sick, for the questionable benefits for a third person, to the detriment of the broader human society.
3. As Christians we believe that the 6th Commandment is binding upon all of humanity - "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). It is the firmly held belief of many Christians in Northern Ireland that abortion is the unjust taking of human life - a violent act

performed against creatures who are made in God's image, in which He delights, and which therefore must be resisted by all lawful means.

4. Abortion is an instrument of oppression aimed at the weakest and least represented members of the community. Firstly, the child in the womb has no voice and no choice. By however means they have been conceived, the very fact that they are alive should be enough to recognise their presence and their value. They have no say in their care and need vocal advocates to speak up for them. Today, we are advocating for their precious lives. Secondly, the burden of abortion falls heavily on the poor, the underprivileged and on females. Instead of supporting and nurturing all people in spite of their social class and bank balance, our Government makes it easier for them to abort their unborn children. Instead of recognising children as being a blessing, male and female, sex selective abortion (officially or unofficially) undermines the value of women and female children in our society.
5. Healthcare in Northern Ireland is in a parlous state, due to chronic underfunding, understaffing, and the lack of a sitting Government. Imposing abortion on our healthcare system risks destabilising our GP service, many of whom are contemplating retiring. It risks demoralising our nursing service and radically altering the dynamic of our midwifery service. It risks burdening our hospitals with unnecessary procedures, extra complications, divisions within departments and lengthening of waiting lists - all of which will likely have a negative effect on the population of Northern Ireland who rely on healthcare services for medical problems. Requiring the NHS in Northern Ireland to fund multiple medically unnecessary procedures will cause a significant drain on an already overstretched budget.
6. For the UK government to impose de facto abortion on Northern Ireland without the express will of the populace as worked out through democratically elected representatives is to disrespect our country and to ride roughshod over the Governmental position that "abortion is a devolved matter". The Governments of the various parts of the United Kingdom have already undermined the Northern Ireland position on abortion by actively courting our patients through the free and easy access to their own abortion services. In no other aspect of health care is such behaviour necessary, underlining the fact that this is an ideologically driven decision, not based on healthcare needs. In addition, we are dismayed at the failure of our locally elected representatives to form a functioning Government, and we wish to hold them to account for that failure, and would appeal for all parties to return to Stormont as a matter of urgency.
7. Much has been said about abortion in cases of fatal foetal abnormality. While we do not want to minimise the pain and concern of mothers and fathers who find themselves in this awful position, we would raise a number of significant concerns. Firstly, diagnosis of illness within the womb is fraught with difficulty, as highlighted by the recent case in the Republic of Ireland in which a baby was aborted at the National Maternity Hospital because of a prenatal diagnosis of the chromosomal disorder Edwards Syndrome - the child was subsequently found out to be genetically normal, much to the dismay of the child's parents. Secondly, we believe that in many cases it is more humane for the child to be delivered, even though they may live for only a few

short hours or days; medical predictions of lifespan have sometimes been grossly underestimated in these cases. This short time with their child may well allow a family a few precious hours to hold their child, and will then allow them to properly grieve for the tragic loss of their baby. This highlights the need for compassionate perinatal hospice facilities in our country. We recognise that there is also valid difference of opinion amongst medical professionals in the most profound cases of foetal abnormality. Thirdly, the evidence from nations where abortion is allowed for foetal abnormality is that prenatal diagnosis is increasingly used to actively screen out minor and correctable abnormalities such as cleft palate and non-fatal conditions such as Down's Syndrome. This is discrimination of the most abhorrent form against those of us with disabilities, who often have the potential to live full and joyful lives, bringing blessing to those around them and enriching the lives of those inside and outside of their family. Our concern is that legislation made for compassionate reasons is leveraged for ideological reasons, with the resulting 'mission creep' witnessed in a nation like Iceland, where nearly all children with Down's syndrome have been aborted - we believe a nation is poorer because of this.

8. As Christian healthcare workers, we have deep compassion for women who have had abortions in the past, and we recognise some of the circumstances and pressures that they may have faced which led them to this course of action. We recognise also that healthcare workers are culpable in these acts, and bear responsibility for advice and actions surrounding abortions. We would appeal to our colleagues in the health care system in Northern Ireland to join with us in speaking out against abortion in our country, and beyond. We desire that those women who have been left with psychological wounds as a result of abortion would be able to access psychological therapies for healing, and we, as fellow sinners, would point them to Jesus Christ, the Great Physician - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9).

The prevailing belief among Christian healthcare workers is that this legislation is harmful - harmful to the women it claims to empower; harmful to the workers whose right to conscientious objection is denied; and, most of all, fatal to the infant children who will be the silent victims of the most liberal abortion laws in Western Europe.

We appeal to the UK Government not to impose this unwanted legislation. We appeal to our elected representatives to re-establish a functional Northern Ireland Government so that democratic process be restored. We appeal to the wider society to consider and reflect on the humanity and value of every life, from conception to death, that the weakest and most vulnerable would be protected and cherished by all.

Signed:	Ashleigh Martin	Ashleigh Hewitt
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Marie Mullan	Sarah Moffatt	Grace Elliott
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Amanda Pollock	Yvonne Gracey	Diane Johnston
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Catherine Kerr	Emma McKinney	Christina Nesbitt
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Ruth Parker	Rosey Meiring	James Irwin
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Joanne McNeilly	Karen Nightingale	Claire Hunter
Alison Hall	Ruth Coulter	Kathryn Quinn
Davy Green	Catherine Bell	Clair Quin
Simon Patterson	Anne Harris	Judith Thompson
Deborah Simpson	Mary Davison	Victoria McKee
Craig McCollum	Emma Warnock	Ben Johnston
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Elaine Skilling	Rosnah Anderson	Catriona Fleming
Mark Cromie	May Cairns	Cathy Johnston
Niamh Trainor	Abigail Loughridge	Karen Dodds
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Claire Sneddon	Rachel Hawthorne	Judith Sherrard
Charlotte Benton	Andrea Prichard	Linda Park
Louise Halliday	Abbie Gray	Glenda Paget

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Hazel Macauley	Caroline Lennox	Laura Jamison
Jenny Dixon	Elaine Murphy	Heather Fleck
Ruth Coulter	Gwen Logan	Eden Sloan
Rhoda Alcorn	Pamela Graham	Ruth Foy
Ruth Humphreys	Janine Keys	Louise Kerr
Rachel Irwin	Richard McMaster	Stephanie Leckey
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Naomi Kirk	Cherie Sloan	Kate Alves-Areias
Hannah McCollum	David McBriar	Judith Lannon
Annabel McCandless	Naomi Graham	Daniel Lannon
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Jenny McAllister	Elaine Lowry	Rebecca Smith
Laura Gray	Stephen Laverty	Mark Anderson
Emma Hamilton	Lauren Selfridge	Sarah Jamison
Colleen Lannon	Hannah McAuley	Julie Strain
Donna McIntyre	David McCormick	Sarah Jane Morgan
Michelle Grant	Ruth Shepherd	Roy Harper
Lynn Rennie	Clare Wilson	Dona Karikunnel
Laura Kernohan	Joanne Parke	Roger Brown
Kerry Bannister	Allison Lloyd	Karen Cox
Rachel Lappin	Lesley Houston	Terri Freeburn
Debbie Cross	Lynne Paul	Lauren Selfridge

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Cherith Moody	Rebekah Moore	Áine Canavan
Eva Dalzell	Caroline Stewart	Kealan Barrett
Anne Craig	Janine Keys	Kerrie McConnell
Morag Boyd	Ruth Ferris	Sam Thompson
Joanne Fulton	Lois Craig	Ciara Hopkins
Trevor Maze	Rebekah McAnally	Rachel Lockhard
Stephanie Leckey	Sarah Williamson	April Linton
Garth Fulton	Louise Speers 835	Emma Johnston
Dickie Barr	Nicole Cartan	Elaine Gregg
Jane Morrow	Patricia Burke	Rosie Dixon
Gillian Taylor	Lorna Bell	Kathryn Morgan
Judith Orr	Janet Joyce	Nick Lipscomb
Nicola Peacocke	Jackie Givan	Jill Campton
Lynda Lynch	Rebecca Muldrew	Hollie McCalmont
Lois Craig	Sharon Cooper	Allison Jelly
Aaron Harrison	Melinda Steele	Carol Wotherspoon
Olwen Collins	Heather Hunter	Louise McKinney
Jenny Preston	Ruth Ferris	Cherith Anderson
Rachel Conn	Rachel Love	Roisin Quinn
Ruth Thomas	Helen Stevenson	Joy Smyth
Victoria McDowell	Jane McConnell	Ben Dilworth
Rebekah Jones	Catherine Edwards	Ellen Campbell
Fiona Greenfield	Debbie MacDonald	Lauren Aiken
Ellisa Bones	Kelly Rocks	Nigel Campbell
Lisa Foulger	Anne Potts	Ruth Hanbridge
Louise van der Linde	Claire Sinton	Rebecca McKenna
Grace McPeake	Helen McAuley	Elizabeth Whyte
Esther Gorman	Jill Massey	Charlene Steenson
Cherie McKay	Katie Rice	Margaret Galloway

Clare McKelvey

Lynne Connor McDowell

Karen McClean

Jennie Grey

Mark Currie

Alison Jenkinson

Thomas Moore

Gwen Logan

Catherine Hanna

Gillian Easton

Sharon Hanna

John McCullough

Linda Lambe

Stephen Rodgers

Matthew McFadden

Colin Petherick

Rebekah Logan

Jonathon Dunlop

Elaine Thorpe

Cara McCarter

Erin Johnston

Julie Netherton

Roger Dunlop

Lisa Bell

David Mark

Tessa Arnold 911

We are General Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Emergency Nurses, Midwives, Obstetricians, Psychiatrists, General Surgeons, Urologists, Healthcare Assistants, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Pharmacists, Medical Students, Nursing Students, F1 Doctors, F2 Doctors, Microbiologists, Paediatricians, Public Health Doctors, Emergency Medicine Doctors, General Physicians, Children's Nurses, Clinical Nurse Specialists, Oncologists, Radiographers, Public Health Nurses, Community Nurses, Intensive Care Nurses, Anaesthetists, Geriatricians, Nursing Sisters and Deputy Sisters, Emergency Nurse Practitioners, Orthopaedic Surgeons, Dietitians, Rheumatologists, Social Workers, Paramedics, Palliative Care Doctors and Nurses, Occupational Health Doctors and Nurses, Clinical Psychologists, Marie Curie Nurses, Mental Health Nurses, Theatre Nurses, Respiratory Physicians, Hospice Nurse Specialists, Renal Nurses, Missionary Doctors, Brain Injury and Rehabilitation Nurses, Nurse Endoscopists, Parish Nurses, Dentists, Learning Disability Nurses, Infection Control Nurses, Optometrists, Podiatrists, District Nurses, Research Nurses, Orthotists, Support Workers, Neonatal Nurses, Endocrinologists, Cardiac Specialist Nurses, Patient Flow Co-ordinators and Health Visitors. We represent all stages of training and employment from students, through specialty trainees, employed staff, specialist staff, senior staff and retired staff.

We are speaking out for those who have no voice.