



16 DEC 2016

## Submission to the Citizens' Assembly On behalf of Youth Defence

We strongly believe in the value of every human life, and the prospect of a vote to remove the right to life from a group of our citizens causes us great concern. Every member of our society should be afforded their fundamental human right - the human right to life - regardless of their age, gender, size, level of ability or development, or location.

The 8th amendment guarantees the equal right to life of both women and their preborn babies. The 8th was approved by the people in 1983 and, since that time, has saved an estimated 250,000 lives because our abortion rate has remained much lower than that of countries with legalised abortion. In Britain, one in every five babies is killed by abortion. In Ireland, that figure is one in every twenty. If we had Britain's abortion rate we would see 10,000 more abortions every year – or 30 more every day.

The 8th amendment is a piece of legislation that ensures the protection of the most basic human rights. Preborn infants are human beings and they need the protection of society. At 21 days gestation, our hearts are already beating. Every abortion ends a human life.

It protects the lives of pregnant women and allows our doctors to provide all necessary life-saving care to women experiencing medical emergencies during pregnancy. As top medical experts testified to the Oireachtas in 2013, no woman has ever died in Ireland because of our pro-life laws. Our maternal mortality rate remains one of the lowest in the world.

Abortion hurts women. A 2008 study (Fergusson et al) found that post-abortive women are 30% more likely to experience serious mental health problems while a 2006 study (Gissler et al) found that the suicide rate for post-abortive women was six times higher than women who had given birth.

Abortion not only has negative effects on women but it is also an inhumane practice towards the unborn. These children are often dismembered and removed piece by piece or given a lethal injection directly into their hearts. This practice is barbaric.

Because of our law, babies with disabilities and severe life limiting conditions are guaranteed the same protections as every other child. The fact is that most babies,

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even the most severe cases, live after birth and their families find their time together enormously healing. Parents of these babies recognise their children's lives as precious and they need improved perinatal hospice care, not abortion.

We have seen in other jurisdictions where abortion has been made legal that abortion discriminates against the most vulnerable. In England and Wales, 90% of babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome before birth are aborted. In Iceland, that figure is 100%.

Ireland has a proud history of standing up in defence of human rights and the 8th amendment is a testament to that. Our laws do not allow us to discriminate based on ability, or gender, or age, or level of dependency, which sadly happens in every country that allows abortion. I urge you to consider this carefully and to remember that societies are judged on how we treat our most vulnerable members.

For all those who cannot speak for themselves to ask you for their right to life - please protect the 8th amendment.

Best Regards

Youth Defence