NATIONAL WOMEN’S COUNCIL
OF IRELAND

ORLA O’CONNOR
DIRECTOR

ADDRESS TO THE CITIZENS’ ASSEMBLY ON ITS CONSIDERATION OF ARTICLE 40.3.3, BUNREACHT NA HÉIREANN

(THE EIGHTH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION)

MARCH 2017
Who We Are

- Founded in 1973, NWCI is the leading national women’s membership organisation in the country.

- Membership of over 180 groups and organisations from a diversity of backgrounds, sectors and locations across Ireland.

- We seek to address the full range of inequalities that women experience: poverty; decision making; pensions; childcare; lone parenting; and health.

- We are recognised by government as the expert representative body for women in Ireland.
Who Is Accessing Abortion Services

UK Department of Health Statistics 2015
- 46% of the women resident in Ireland who have an abortion in English and Welsh clinics were in their 20s
- 45% of women accessing these services were 30 years of age and over

BPAS statistics
- In 2016, 54% of women resident in the UK accessing their abortion services already had children
Restricting legal access to abortion does not decrease the need for abortion.

Conversely, laws and policies that facilitate access to safe abortion do not increase the rate or number of abortions.

Regulatory and policy barriers that hinder access to safe abortion should be removed.
Proposed Solutions

- A referendum to **repeal the Eighth Amendment** to the Constitution
- **Enact legislation** providing access to abortion **on a woman’s request** in line with good practice in other European countries, combined with abortion in later terms certain circumstances.
- Remove all criminal sanctions on women seeking and accessing abortion services in Ireland.
- **Removal of criminal sanctions on medical professionals** performing abortions and **regulate through customary medical disciplinary procedures** and general criminal law.