

SUBMISSION TO THE CITIZENS ASSEMBLY RE THE 8TH AMENDMENT

As the 99 members of the Citizen's Assembly deliberate the issue of the 8th Amendment to the Irish Constitution I would ask you to consider what this Amendment actually is about. It gives equal protection to the life of the mother and child in the womb. Surely that is a good thing? The repeal of this Amendment would remove the rights of an entire group of human beings in Irish society – the unborn. An abortion is the deliberate killing of an innocent life. It is always wrong. A procedure to intervene for the sake of the health of a gravely ill pregnant woman even if it endangers the life of the unborn is right because the intention is to heal, not to kill. If the baby survives all involved are happy. In an abortion the child in the womb is the problem, the target. Its life is intentionally destroyed.

If we are truly interested in care of women's health then we must also consider the female in the womb. Abortion is not good healthcare for women and rather than try to get rid of the unwanted, as a society we need to address the practical reasons why women feel the need to have abortions. Abortion is yet another form of repression and the cause of suffering for women. What we need is an abortion-free society where men truly respect the dignity of women rather than subject them to this form of suffering.

Listening to the stories of women who have had abortions you realize the pain which they carry often on a daily basis. Groups like *Women Hurt* find it very difficult to get their stories told in the public square. Their voices are silenced but the pain remains. The language they heard before they went to the clinic was of liberation and 'reproductive rights'. But the opposite happened. The information they received at abortion referral made them feel they were doing their unborn children a favour by having an abortion. But their grief, when the reality of what they have done hits them, is excruciating. Take a look at the work of Rachel's Vineyard who work with women who have had an abortion.

As a society we must love both mother and child and care, as we currently do, for the health of the mother and the baby equally, giving all the necessary medical treatment, irrespective of the condition of the baby in the womb. What message are we giving to the disabled in our country if we are prepared to destroy human beings who are defective?

Ireland has a proud tradition in maternal health care. What we need is greater support for our health system and better maternal and perinatal services.

We must be courageously pro woman, promoting a choice which is truly in favour of women. The only honest choice is that of solidarity with the woman and the child.