

One Day More <info@onedaymore.ie>

13/12/2017 08:38

To
eighthamendment@oireachtas.ie
cc

bcc

Subject
Clarifications and Response

Senator Catherine Noone
Chairperson
Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Wed 13th Dec 2017

Dear Senator Noone,

It has come to my attention that the Danish ambassador to Ireland wrote to your committee (December 6, 2017) disputing the claim that Denmark has an official policy to eradicate Down syndrome by abortion. Denmark can say it is not an official policy, but the facts tell a different story. Denmark was the first European country to introduce routine screening for Down syndrome in 2006.

Today 98% [1] of babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome in Denmark are aborted. The ambassador in his letter drew attention to the fact that in 2016, 4 babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome in Denmark were born. What the letter failed to mention is that in the same year, 133 out of 137 babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome were aborted.

Official government policy in Denmark has facilitated all the changes that led to this truly appalling outcome. There is no indication from any public utterances of members of the Danish government that they are concerned at how things have turned out and equally there are no signs that any corrective action is being proposed to make Denmark a more welcoming place for babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome.

When I raised concerns during my presentation to your committee about the targeting of babies with Down Syndrome by abortion, I didn't confine my remarks to Denmark. I spoke in a more general sense too about what inevitably occurs in countries where abortion is legal and how it becomes impossible to vindicate the right to life, particularly of the most vulnerable, including babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome. When I presented to your committee, Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked me to come back to the committee with clarifications for a number of other points I raised. I will take this opportunity to do so.

I mentioned at the committee that in many countries with legalised abortion, 1 in 5 or more pregnancies now end in abortion. To take the example of our closest neighbour, this rate of 1 in 5 pregnancies being aborted is an official, undisputed figure from the Office for National

Statistics[2] . In response to me, Deputy O'Brien mentioned countries like Sweden and Switzerland. He said your committee had been furnished with information suggesting that Sweden has a rate of "18 in every 1,000" and Switzerland where the rate is "five in every 1,000". These figures relate to the number of women of child bearing age who have an abortion each year, and not to the actual proportion of pregnancies that are aborted, which is what I was referring to. It is not evident from the Deputy's question if this distinction was fully appreciated. For the record, a disturbing 24.4% of pregnancies are aborted in Sweden, or 1 in 4 pregnancies.

The rate in Switzerland is a little lower at 10.2% of pregnancies, and is at the lower end for mainland Europe. However, this abortion rate is still more than twice that of Ireland's. Ireland has a consistently lower number of abortions and a lower percentage of pregnancies that end in abortion. This is thanks to the 8th Amendment which, by preventing the normalisation of abortion which has occurred in every country in which it has been legalised, has saved many lives since 1983.

Deputy O'Brien also asked me to clarify which countries allow abortion throughout the nine months of pregnancy and even at the point of birth. The answer is numerous countries do. Abortion, for example, is legal in England in this way where the unborn baby has any disability at all. Babies born alive after botched abortions are routinely left to die without receiving resuscitation or any medical care whatsoever.[3]

I would appreciate if this letter could be read into the record of the committee. Given that a member of your committee sought these clarifications from me and given that the Danish ambassador to Ireland had his letter read into the record, I strongly request that my letter likewise be noted in the same manner.

Yours sincerely,
Liz McDermott
One Day More

[1]
<https://www.sst.dk/da/udgivelser/2017/~media/DF9E4D6167154966800B7ACC8B7F2B59.ashx>

[2] Office for National Statistics, England & Wales, 2017

[3] Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health, Perinatal Mortality 2005 England, Wales and Northern Ireland, April 2007