

The Hon. Ms. Justice Mary Laffoy

Chairperson

Citizens Assembly

**Re: 8th Amendment to the Constitution**

Dear Chairperson

We welcome this opportunity to make a submission in support of repealing the 8th Amendment to our Constitution.

As a human rights and equality organisation, GLEN strongly believes that repealing the 8th Amendment is vital to ensuring the human rights and equality of women in this State. It should be noted that more than 50% ?? of our LGBT communities are women whose rights and equality are denied by the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

As no doubt you are aware, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has taken the position that this is a matter of human rights and equality supporting the views of International Human Rights bodies such as the UN Human Rights Committee.

For example in the IHREC Submission to UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women it stated:

"73. Overall, the IHREC has expressed its concern that the current legal position in relation to abortion not only puts in place barriers which impede a woman's right to bodily autonomy, but also that it has a disproportionate impact on women from lower socio-economic backgrounds and in particular, asylum seeking women and migrant women whose ability to travel may be circumscribed due to their immigration status. It is in the context of these concerns and the relevant international human right law, that the IHREC has endorsed the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that the State take all the steps necessary, including a referendum on abortion, to revise its law to bring it in line with international human rights standards."

[http://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/ihrec\\_submission\\_to\\_cedaw\\_loipr\\_2015.pdf](http://www.ihrec.ie/download/pdf/ihrec_submission_to_cedaw_loipr_2015.pdf)

The Cork Gay Collective and the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Collective were centrally involved in the Anti-Amendment Campaign in the early 1980s to stop the abortion amendment being put into our Constitution, the Collectives later went on to found GLEN. One of the key points we made at that time when gay men were still criminalised for consenting sexual relationships, was that decriminalisation and

opposition to the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment were based on the same principle of bodily integrity.

We also made the point that that the abortion issue was so complex that it should be left to the Oireachtas and legislation; that a Constitutional Amendment was not the right way to resolve these complex issues; and that there were many potential unforeseen/unintended consequences when any Amendment came to be interpreted by the Courts. And this is how things turned out.

We would like state our support for the Coalition to Repeal the 8th Amendment whose objective is to "respect and protect women's lives, health and choices".

The successful marriage equality referendum was widely welcomed as a great step forward for human rights and equality in our Republic by embedding these values in our Constitution. We believe that removing this Amendment from our Constitution will represent similar progress for human rights and equality in our Democratic Republic and in our Constitution.

Regards

Kieran Rose

XX ..... November 2016