



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion
(Amendment) Bill: Clause-by-clause
Consideration

21 October 2021

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)
Mrs Pam Cameron (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradshaw
Mr Gerry Carroll
Mr Alan Chambers
Ms Órlaithí Flynn
Mr Colin McGrath
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): Members, I will proceed through the clauses and put the Questions formally. I advise members that, where there are amendments, I will put the Question on the amendment first. If there is not consensus on the Question, I will ask members to vote through a show of hands, and the Clerk will confirm the result of each vote.

Clause 1 (Amendment of abortion on the grounds of disability)

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): Is the Committee content with clause 1 as drafted?

Mr Carroll: No.

Mrs Cameron: Yes, Chair.

Mr Carroll: No.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): There are two different views there, so we are going to put that to a vote.

Question put, That the Committee is content with the clause.

The Committee divided:

Ayes 2; Noes 2; Abstentions 4.

AYES

Mr Buckley, Mrs Cameron.

NOES

Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll.

ABSTENTIONS

Ms Flynn, Mr Gildernew, Mr McGrath, Ms Ní Chuilín.

Question accordingly negatived.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): Before we go any further, has Alan been put out of the meeting and not been able to rejoin? I wonder what has happened there. *[Pause.]* He has not been on yet? Okay.

The Committee Clerk: To confirm, I have Pam and Jonathan in favour of clause 1, Gerry and Paula against clause 1, and the rest of the members are not voting. Is that correct?

Mr McGrath: I will be 100% honest. This is my first meeting, and we are near the end of the process, so I have not been able to get the evidence on a lot of the issues. I am going to abstain from these votes today, but I will certainly listen and take a view in the Chamber.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): So what is the outcome, Clerk?

The Committee Clerk: OK. The outcome is that the clause is not supported, because there is not a majority in favour of it. The next question, Chair, is whether the Committee wishes to —

Mrs Cameron: Chair, I see that Alan is in the audience.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): We will bring him up.

Mr Carroll: Chair, did we not vote already, though?

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): Clerk, what is your view on that?

Mr Carroll: I do not want to exclude him, but we had the vote already, so surely we cannot have it again.

The Committee Clerk: Chair, my advice is that there may have been an issue with Alan's connection and, therefore, he was not able to get on, as opposed to having left.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): Yes. Given the circumstances of how we went out of the meeting and back in again, we should, to be fair, rerun that vote.

Question put, That the Committee is content with the clause.

The Committee divided:

Ayes 3; Noes 2; Abstentions 4.

AYES

Mr Buckley, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers.

NOES

Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll.

ABSTENTIONS

Ms Flynn, Mr Gildernew, Mr McGrath, Ms Ní Chuilín.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 2 (Short title and commencement)

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): The Bill sponsor has proposed an amendment. I refer members to page 21 of the tabled papers. The Committee was advised by the Bill sponsor that this is a technical amendment to bring clarity to the commencement date.

Amendment proposed:

In page 1, line 10, leave out "force on the day on which this Act receives" and insert "operation on the day after receiving". — [Mr Stalford.]

Question put.

The Committee divided:

Ayes 3; Noes 2; Abstentions 4.

AYES

Mr Buckley, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers.

NOES

Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll.

ABSTENTIONS

Ms Flynn, Mr Gildernew, Mr McGrath, Ms Ní Chuilín.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put, That the Committee is content with the clause, subject to the proposed amendment.

The Committee divided:

Ayes 3; Noes 2; Abstentions 4.

AYES

Mr Buckley, Mrs Cameron, Mr Chambers.

NOES

Ms Bradshaw, Mr Carroll.

ABSTENTIONS

Ms Flynn, Mr Gildernew, Mr McGrath, Ms Ní Chuilín.

Question accordingly agreed to.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): Thank you, members.