



Joint statement on Scotland Bill, amendment NC56, “Abortion”

To move the following Clause— “Abortion”

In Part 2 of Schedule 5 to the 1998 Act, leave out section J1 (abortion).”

Member’s explanatory statement: This amendment removes the specific reservation of abortion, thus transferring competence over abortion to the Scottish Parliament.

As women's and human rights organisations based in Scotland, we are unequivocal in our calls for the realisation of women's reproductive health and rights, including safe access to abortion.

We note that this amendment has been submitted to the Scotland Bill by three MPs who represent constituencies outside Scotland, and who are members of the All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group.

Recognising the complexity of the discussion around abortion rights, the Smith Commission made a recommendation that the devolution of abortion be considered outside of the Scotland Bill process. To date, the Scotland Office and the Scottish Government have yet to consult women or women's organisations in Scotland on this.

We are already in the situation in the UK where different legal frameworks on abortion have resulted in a discriminatory impact against women and girls in Northern Ireland, for which the UK has been repeatedly criticised internationally. Our concern is that this strategy of hasty devolution is being used in order to argue for regressive measures and in turn, a differential and discriminatory impact on women and girls in Scotland.

Women across the UK have fought for women’s bodies to be their own, and to this day, fight opposition to a women’s right to choose. We do not wish this amendment to open the doors to those who seek to undermine this right. As such, we would ask that you vote against this amendment.

Emma Ritch, Executive Director, Engender
Marsha Scott, Chief Executive, Scottish Women's Aid
Laura Tomson, Co-Director, Zero Tolerance
Jenny Kemp, Co-Director, Zero Tolerance
Sandy Brindley, National Co-ordinator, Rape Crisis Scotland
Sandie Barton, National Co-ordinator, Rape Crisis Scotland
Vonnie Sandlan, President, NUS Scotland
Emily Beever, Women's Officer, NUS Scotland
Anna Ritchie Allan, Manager, Close the Gap
Jackie Scutt, Director, YWCA Scotland – the young women's movement
Evelyn Fraser, Development Manager, Scottish Women's Convention
Jan Macleod, Manager, Women's Support Project
Naomi McAuliffe, Programme Director, Scotland, Amnesty International
Carole Ewart, Co-ordinator, Human Rights Consortium Scotland
Grahame Smith, General Secretary, Scottish TUC
Ann Henderson, STUC Assistant Secretary; Chair, Abortion Rights Scotland
Committee
Kerry Abel, Chair, Abortion Rights