

#### **Overview of Atheist Ireland**

- Founded in 2008
- Voluntary, no paid staff, no Government funding or grants
- Member of Coalition to Repeal 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment
- Pro-choice human rights based stance on abortion
- Addressed Oireachtas Health Committee on abortion



# Faith-based morality no more authority than secular morality

- Faith is only one way people form ethics and morality
- Irish people have different moral values about abortion
- State has duty to protect individual moral conscience
- State has duty to formulate evidence-based legislation



# 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment is religiously-inspired

- Religiously-inspired view is opinion-based not evidence-based
- In a secular, pluralist democracy, people are free to hold religious beliefs, but not to impose them on others



#### Religious and atheists both have freedom of conscience

- Right to freedom of religion protects conscience of religious
- Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion also protects conscience of atheists & non-religious
- Irish abortion law does not respect freedom of conscience



#### Morality does not require a religious value system.

Secular morality is:

- Evidence-based, involves critical thought
- Focused on reduction of harm
- Focused on increase of well-being
- Grounded in human rights



# A, B & C Case: Irish State claims 'profound moral values'

- Different Irish people have different moral values on abortion
- For many, abortion is against their moral conscience
- For others, denying women access to abortion is against our moral conscience, as it denies women bodily autonomy



#### Irish State talks as if abortion was a settled moral value

- No settled consensus that abortion is morally wrong
- Even less support for idea that it should be illegal
- To protect supposed 'profound moral values', State denies abortion to women who have different moral values



## Three Assertions based on religious moral argument

1. Catholic Bishops Conference

Claims that, despite diagnosis of **fatal foetal abnormality**, a woman must carry pregnancy to natural conclusion (miscarriage or birth)

- Choice to proceed is right decision for some women
- Choice to terminate is right decision for other women



## Three Assertions based on religious moral argument

- Church of Ireland General Synod
   Recognises that Constitution not place to address healthcare
   Abortion only in cases of 'undeniable medical necessity'
- This highlights lack of consensus even between different religious moral approaches to abortion

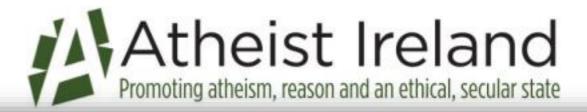


# Three Assertions based on religious moral argument

#### 3. Iona Institute

Claims pro-choice argument ignores humanity of foetus

- But unlike a foetus, a pregnant woman is a human person
- Difference is between biology and biography
- A foetus is biologically human, but has no biography
- A woman has biography



## **Summary of our 5 key points**

- 1. The State should not impose laws on all citizens based on the conscience of some mostly religious citizens
- 2. Constitution not the place to deal with healthcare matters
- 3. The 8th Amendment should be repealed, not replaced



#### **Summary of our 5 key points**

- 4. Only a full repeal of the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment will allow Oireachtas to properly formulate legislation on abortion
- 5. Anything less than full repeal will result in us having to return to this issue over and over typically after tragedies