**Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP**

**Secretary of State for Northern Ireland**

**Northern Ireland Office**

**1 Horseguards Road**

**London**

**SW1A 2HQ**

 **Our Ref: FS/WEST02021/02152250**

**22 July 2015**

**Re: PROSECUTION FOR PURCHASING ABORTION MEDICATION**

A large number of constituents have contacted me recently about the prosecution of a woman in Belfast for obtaining abortion drugs for her young daughter. I do not have full details, but I was shocked to hear that this family were desperate enough to feel that they had to buy these drugs. It seems to me that it is about time the law was changed to bring Northern Ireland in line with the rest of the UK on this vitally important issue.

Whilst I appreciate that this is a devolved matter, and you have no direct input into prosecution decisions in Northern Ireland, there are wider issues here relating to human rights, as the UN Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women has indicated.

I cannot see that it would be in the public interest to prosecute in a case like this. I understand that a large number of women in Northern Ireland have made statements indicating that they, too, have purchased abortion medication. As the law stands, presumably they could also be prosecuted, as could any future purchasers of similar drugs.

I would appreciate your comments on this issue – what action could the UK government take to discourage prosecutions in abortion medication cases? What pressure could be brought to bear on the Northern Ireland authorities to ensure that they reconsider the criminal law in this vitally important area?

Thank you for your help in this – I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

**Emily Thornberry MP**

**Islington South and Finsbury**