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WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

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World Federation of the Deaf response to the UK Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) would like to draw attention to Clause 14, Section 4, Number 9 of the proposed UK Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, which states that *‘persons or embryos that are known to have a gene, chromosome or mitochondrion abnormality involving a significant risk that a person with the abnormality will have or develop – a) a serious physical or mental disability; b) a serious illness or c) any other serious mental condition, must not be preferred to those that are not known to have such an abnormality.’* The World Federation of the Deaf is seriously concerned about the implications of the above-mentioned clause. As currently written, it appears to violate the human rights of many people, for instance for deaf people, as it restricts the reproductive liberty for people with specific characteristics; it prevents the birth of certain kind of people, including deaf people; and it classifies deafness as a ‘serious disease’, which by the provision of the Bill is a legal ground for abortion.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, Article 3 (d) states that the principles of the Convention shall be: *‘Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity’*; and Article 10 states that: *‘States Parties reaffirm that every human being has the inherent right to life and shall take all necessary measures to ensure its effective enjoyment by persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.’*

The World Federation of the Deaf therefore requests that Clause 14, number 4, section 9 be omitted from the proposed Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill.

Helsinki, March 19th, 2008

Yours sincerely,



Markku Jokinen
WFD President