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03/11/2020

Deputy Pringle
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ32109/20 - To ask the Minister for Health the evidence-based scientific study he and the HSE are currently using to justify denying women their internationally recognised human right to a birth partner of their choice physically present with them throughout pregnancy, labour and birth a blatant violation of their human rights

PQ32110/20 - To ask the Minister for Health the evidence-based reasoning that he and the HSE are currently using for choosing to go directly against the World Health Organisation guidelines that specifically state that Covid-19 should not pose a barrier to a woman having a partner of their choice physically present with them throughout their labour and birth even in which Covid-19 is suspected or confirmed.

PQ32112/20 - To ask the Minister for Health the reason for adhering to international best practice guidelines in maternity care, such as but certainly not limited to, the World Health Organisation position that all women should continue to have access to a birth partner of their choice during the Covid-19 pandemic is allowed to be optional in Irish hospitals

Dear Deputy Pringle,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Please see attached, a copy of a document from the HSE entitled 'Visiting Practices in Maternity Services'. To the best of our knowledge since early in the pandemic all maternity hospitals have facilitated the attendance of a partner during labour and birth.

In the case of scans where bad news occurs unexpectedly all units are requested to deal with the situation as sympathetically and humanely as possible.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary-Jo Biggs'.

Mary-Jo Biggs, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme