

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Kerry Abel**  
Chair of Abortion Rights  
[choice@abortionrights.org.uk](mailto:choice@abortionrights.org.uk)

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**Date:** 10 MAY 2019

Dear Ms Abel,

Thank you for your letter about the March for Life, anti-abortion protest, which is due to take place in London on Saturday 11 May 2019.

I have a long-standing history of supporting the right of women to have an abortion, and I fully back the message and aims behind your countermarch – March for Choice.

The right to have an abortion must be safeguarded, as I believe women should be trusted to make their own decisions about their own bodies.

I share your concerns about the recent increase in the unacceptable promotion of harassment against abortion providers and the pregnant women who want to use these services. Women who are attempting to access legal medical services should always be able to do so without fear of harassment or intimidation.

Of course, I recognise that some people passionately hold different views and they should be allowed to voice them if they wish. But this must be balanced by the recognition that women have the right to get medical advice and to seek treatment in confidence, free from abuse.

This means that we must do more as a country to stop any intimidating behaviour against women seeking to exercise their basic rights. That's why I have argued that we must do more to allow robust action to address harassment of women attending abortion clinics. I fully supported Ealing Council when they introduced a 100m protest-free "buffer zone" outside an abortion clinic. This has proved very successful in reducing anti-social behaviour, intimidation and harassment and I was deeply disappointed when the Government refused to implement similar "buffer zones" across the country to stop protesters coming into direct contact with patients.

Last year, we marked the centenary of the first women in our country securing the right to vote. We have come a long way over the past hundred years, with women gaining many crucial rights. But we still have a long way to go. That's why, now more than ever, it's vital that we not only continue to push for full gender equality, but that we safeguard the key rights already secured, including the right to have an abortion. As part of this, we must always show a zero tolerance approach against behaviour that seeks to intimidate or bully women.

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I am grateful for the work you and your organisation are doing.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,



**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London