

264 hours for Sofia

No one will tell me any different

September 25, 2017

To whomever it may concern,

In writing this letter, I want to make it known very clearly that I do so not in any attempt to try to speak on anyone's behalf, other than my two children Sofia and Angelo and my beautiful partner KellyLouise. I feel and believe that this is my duty as a father and a partner. I would also like to dispel the notion that because one of my children is not with us that this should be considered a negative in any way. I believe that for her short time she spent even though not alive in the physical world she has affected and made such an impact that she can only be a positive in every way. I refuse point blank to believe that she does not exist as the law at the moment says. Really though if she does not exist, I do not either!

In the short, I am a father to a legal nomad or loophole that no person wants to speak about as it scares and rocks them to the core. That is why this group in this parliament is so vital in every way. My little girl is legally considered a late miscarriage and a non-viable foetus but I can ensure everyone in this room she is much more than that.

On Saturday 17th October at 01.56am, Sofia Chapman came into this big bad world born asleep and not aware of the fuss she has caused and that two people had loved her before we even met her and that love still burns bright. As her Dad I was smitten all I could see was the beauty and grace she emitted, trust me it spoke to us more than a thousand words ever could. At twenty-two weeks and three days gestation, Sofia missed the cut off for the viability limit by two hundred and sixty four hours to be given the dignity of having her place in the world. We have no record, no birth or death certificate to prove our daughter's existence. All we got was a piece of paper with the city council badge on it proclaiming she was a non-viable foetus. Those archaic three words defined our world at that moment. No care seemed to be given in how this was presented to us but that's where we found ourselves. That's all we had at that moment to show our daughter entered the world apart from the photos we took and the visual memories we made that are so ingrained we can play that day back and get every detail spot on.

The weird thing about that day is when we compare that day with the birth of our son Angelo, who is here and in this world. We did some of the same things during our first hours with both our son and daughter. We as parents spoke to them both, we held them, we sang to them and we showed them off to family as we are and were the proud parents to both our son and daughter. KellyLouise and I spent twelve hours with a real life angel and that time was so invaluable but in the end, she was being turned into our little hopeless wanderer as we left the hospital.

Before I go on to speaking about any proposed certificate of life or existence, I have one point I want to cover that I feel needs brought into the open. KellyLouise and I like many parents we decided it was paramount to have a post mortem as we had to know why Sofia passed away. As we had to sign the post mortem document, which was shown to us during a time that KellyLouise was heavily sedated with medication from the pregnancy and the birth of Sofia. I firmly believe KellyLouise should have been given more time to go over the post

mortem document, as from my own work as a pawnbroker I believe that the condition Kelly Louise was in she wouldn't have got a loan under any financial conduct authority rules due to not being in a fit state to sign and declare on any form. So why was she ok, under government rules in this case then? I felt the consultant was trying to rush her in case she changed her mind and I was reminded on a few occasions that due to us not being married that I had no right to sign the form. At the time we did not care, we just wanted to be alone with Sofia but I signed that form as a witness with the occupation as father in the box. Why would the consultant insist on "Father" in the witness box if in the eyes of the law she did not exist? You only realise the pain this caused with the benefit of hindsight. One thing that has confused us was the document itself was the lowest age form as we were told was for a child under twelve years of age. We asked about this and we were told it was the proper and correct document. My daughter is considered a late miscarriage and non-viable but she exists when the need to cut her open when research is concerned. If she is non-viable this must be consistent across all government platforms there can be no grey area when it comes to such a massive declaration. I know she exists but when I see the blatant best of both worlds analogy, it can be frustrating. There is massive positives to be taken though due to the amazing work of individuals and charities all over the country. SiMBA in our case have been a massive positive in my family, we thank them for the amazing viewpoint they take on these subjects, and issues, quite simply it shows someone cares and we need more empathy like this not silence.

When the idea was brought to my attention in regards to the idea of a certificate of life, I'm not going to lie I was a little upset and gutted at first. I know Sofia will never get one it just seem to enforce that even more. The thought that parents placed in the same position as us can get help and shown hope when held these important documents like this, it also means they can walk out the hospital with their heads held high knowing their son or daughter's place in the world knowing they legally exist in some form. All that my family want is for people to be shown, the respect and empathy they deserve in this matter and this certificate is a step in the right direction. I would like to ask everyone in this room have they ever held a non-viable foetus before? I know some will have but if you have never it is not what you think. Sofia was a little more red compared to the way we see a baby but trust me I could see likeness in those high chubby cheek bones, eyelashes long enough that people would have complained that she got lucky with them. I could also see those little fingernails on her tiny hands and she had one eye open as if she was giving us a cheeky wink as a bubble was in her little mouth that refused to pop. Air had passed through those lungs, life was present, and that little heart of hers had beat as loud as a drum. I held a life! If you held her too you would know how I feel. She lived inside the human body of her mum, her heart had beaten once, and it should not be dismissed. The fact there is a group set up to discuss these matters is a massive start but I implore you all to please keep talking as it may be work for you but for me and others it's our children and it means everything.

In the end when it has all said and done nothing with bring Sofia back but the thought that parents in the future could leave the hospital with a better more consistent care and message to begin the scary journey of grief is so vital. I personally believe it's wrong we have such a broad difference with some of our neighbours in the world when it comes to viability but that can change with the introduction of this certificate. I believe with all my being that it is wrong to devalue an idea and a human life living or not, viability should not be different border to border but should be more consistent all over. Non-viable is a horrible term used to pass over and forget. In the end, my partner had twenty-two weeks of pregnancy and had to

be told our baby had died. After being induced, she gave birth naturally and then got to hold and spend time with our angel, after this she was told it didn't actually happen and we were holding a medical term. She deserves a medal like all the other woman who have had to do the same. The certificate of life is not just to prove the existence of the forgotten its proof of the amazing bravery of these women who have went through this. We stood during her funeral and do so every time we visit her grave, knowing that she is our baby and no person or government will tell us different. We can never relive that moment but you have the power to influence other parents moments in grief and by doing something that can give hope to so many.

On this day, in a hospital in Scotland, a baby will be born who fits into the parameters we are discussing, born under twenty-four weeks. All I ask is stop adding to this pain and use the tools allowed and available to help these people face the world and help in that grief and hurt they will go through. To me I will always and will be Sofia and Angelo's Dad all I am asking is for everyone in this room to hear the names of the forgotten and speak of them. Remember we as a society should and will be judged on how we treat those that need it most in my humble view we are failing.

The Scotland I was brought up in was one of hope, empathy, laughter and of course innovation, I believe as a nation that has shaped the modern world maybe only behind the Greeks and the Romans that we have a chance to keep changing, shaping and showing that we are a reasonable and rationale thinking people. I think if we turn a blind eye here, we should be ashamed at ourselves. Please tell me I'm wrong be offended at this thought and prove you care and give people the chance to grieve knowing that the upper echelons of our government care!

We left the hospital with a memory box and those archaic three words and that was all. Let others leave with the box and the certificate of LIFE!

If my daughter does not exist then I do not either as a man.

Thanks

Robert Chapman, Sofia and Angelo's Dad