

Statement on the upcoming Second Reading of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill

On 11 September, Members of Parliament will vote on the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill at Second Reading. This important vote will shape the future of care for the most vulnerable members of our society. We remain opposed to this bill, both in principle and in practice.

It is wrong in principle that medical professionals should be involved in ending the lives of their patients. Furthermore, this bill does not contain sufficient safeguards against coercion or protect vulnerable people, including disabled people, those with eating disorders, and victims of domestic abuse. These concerns are shared by disability rights groups and organisations that support people with eating disorders.

They are also shared by relevant professional bodies. Organisations such as the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Association for Palliative Medicine and the British Medical Association have either opposed the bill or raised serious concerns about its provisions. The experience of other countries shows that, once assisted suicide is legalised, its scope can broaden, often dramatically, to include groups who suffer from mental health problems and others who are not terminally ill.

Furthermore, the bill does not adequately protect the conscience rights of health and social care professionals, many of whom are vulnerable and lack job security.

The bill fails to provide an institutional opt-out for hospices and care homes that do not wish to participate. This could lead to the closure of many organisations that provide compassionate care at the end of life.

Many people who are not opposed to assisted suicide as a matter of principle are opposed to this bill. Prime Minister Andy Burnham has joined others in suggesting that assisted suicide should not be considered while palliative and social care services face significant pressures. It is also important to note that evidence from other countries suggests that legalising assisted suicide negatively affects the quality and development of palliative care.

Let us focus on how we can preserve and promote high quality and compassionate end-of-life care for all. If we were to legalise the provision of medical assistance in suicide, it would mark a significant change in our culture. I call upon all people of goodwill to oppose this flawed and dangerous bill.

I also urge Members of Parliament to reject the bill. I thank those MPs who opposed the Bill in the last Parliament and ask you to do so again, especially as we now recognise more clearly the bill's shortcomings.

I also encourage everyone to join me in prayer and action.

You can contact your MP using the form below or by using the postcards that will be delivered to parishes this weekend with a message to Members of Parliament from the disability network Not Dead Yet UK.

Our Lady, Help of the Sick, pray for us.

Archbishop John Sherrington

Lead Bishop for Life Issues

Archbishop of Liverpool

Resources

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/opposing-assisted-suicide>

Contact your MP

<https://righttolife.org.uk/Sept11vote>