



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Re: Assisted Dying Debate

Thank you for sharing my interest in the assisted dying debate. This is a complex and emotive issue that is very important to me. I understand that people have strong ethical and moral views on both sides of this debate.

The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill was put before Parliament by my colleague, Kim Leadbeater MP in November. This Bill was put to a vote and passed with 330 votes in favour and 275 against. This was the first stage of the legislative process, and it will now consider a range of amendments, scrutiny, and further votes before it could become law.

The Bill proposes to make it legal for over-18s who are terminally ill to be given assistance to end their own life. To do so, the individual must have the mental capacity to make the choice and be deemed to have expressed a clear, settled, and informed wish, free from coercion or pressure; must be expected to die within six months; will require two independent doctors to approve the decision and a consultation with a multi-disciplinary panel, consisting of a social worker, psychiatrist and legal expert, overseen by a judge.

For reasons personal to me, I find myself in favour of assisted dying for those who need it. While terminally ill, my mother-in-law was eventually denied food and water due to the requirements of her condition. After food and water were taken away, she went on to live for over a week, deteriorating massively and leaving a lasting effect on her family who had to experience the traumatic last stages of her life.

This Bill takes a very cautious approach, ensuring strict safeguards govern eligibility and access. I'm concerned this won't provide relief for many families suffering. I believe that those in pain at the very end of their life should be able to take the advice of medical professionals to end that suffering, however, I appreciate that this Bill takes steps in the right direction, and allows us to have the important debate on assisted dying.

I agree with many of my colleagues that, regardless of our positions, we need thorough and open debate to ensure all viewpoints, including yours, are heard in Parliament. I'm pleased that the debate we've seen so far is representing all the concerns and strengths of the Bill – allowing for effective scrutiny.

There is concern that assisted dying could be used by the most vulnerable in society, who feel that they are burdensome on their families. I will not support any Bill that does not guarantee the safety of the most vulnerable. It is important to me that assisted dying should not replace high-quality palliative and end-of-life care. Everyone deserves dignity in dying and should feel reassured and safe knowing they will receive the best care.

I'll continue to give my support to this Bill, but also champion another issue. For me, dignity in dying means more than the way in which you die. There is another important issue that this Bill should bring to our attention. It is still legal in this country to sack a worker with a terminal diagnosis on the grounds of 'capability'. Worrying about your job at the end of your life is not a dignified way to die. Most employers do the right thing and protect those workers, but we must come down on employers who don't. It is fundamentally wrong, and I will be working to put an end to that loophole.

As your representative in Parliament, I will keep your points in mind and thank you again for

continuing to engage with me on this important topic.

Yours sincerely,

Lee Barron MP
Member of Parliament for Corby and East Northamptonshire