

View from the House

The House has returned and on Friday 11 September we are sitting to debate the “Assisted Dying Bill”. I am opposed to the Bill and will vote against its further progress.

Those in favour of the Bill argue that it is needed to relieve the suffering of the dying. Dying is not an easy matter for anyone but there have been advances in pain relief and ways to alleviate distress to manage the process of dying. In my view, improving palliative care and hospice at home throughout the country is the better alternative to assisting someone to take their own life.

Evidence from around the world shows that feeling a burden on those around them, being depressed or anxious was cited as reasons for proceeding with assisted dying. Unfortunately those reasons would fit the criteria set out in the Bill and so people would be under pressure to choose assisted suicide. Also 64% of disabled people have real concerns about moves to legalise assisted suicide.

Successive surveys and many of the professional medical bodies say that the great majority of doctors are opposed to this legislation. As they say, their role is to “do no harm and to extend not to foreshorten life”.

The Bill proposes a major change both to the criminal law and to principles underpinning medical practise. An assisted dying law would send a message that if you are terminally ill taking your own life is appropriate to consider. The law as it stands is in line with social attitudes on suicide – that it is not something to be encouraged or assisted. We should provide people with proper care and help terminally ill people to live and die with dignity.

There are other important issues to debate including the threat of cuts to our public services. Many of you have let me know your views on the BBC. It is important to make your Points of View known in the consultation. Why destabilise something that is the envy of the world, fulfils its brief to educate, inform and entertain for £2.80 a week? The Government is wrong to pass on the policy of free TV licences for the over 75s to the BBC.

The Refugee crisis is unfolding and people are in need. The Midlands International Aid Trust whose mission statement is “Bringing Hope- Serving Humanity has helped Syrian refugees for some time. Contact them via their website on miatwalsall.org.uk to offer any help.

Valerie Vaz MP

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