End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Alison Davis

I wish to write a short person statement on why I oppose Margo MacDonald's End of Life Assistance (Scotland) bill.

I have several severe disabling conditions, some degenerative. These include spina bifida, hydrocephalus, emphysema, osteoporosis and arthritis. I spend my days either in bed or in a wheelchair, depending on how bad my pain is. I am paralysed below the waist, and have lack of sensation down the whole right side of my body. My spine is twisting and collapsing due to the osteoporosis, which I've had since childhood. I currently have a fractured/compressed vertebra (L4) which causes great pain. In addition to fractures, when my spine collapse compresses nerves I suffer extreme pain on a daily basis, pain which isn't well controlled, even with morphine and Fentanyl patches. When the pain is very bad I can't move, think or speak.

Twenty five years ago I decided I wanted to die - a settled wish that lasted over 10 years. At that time doctors thought (wrongly as it turned out) that my life expectancy was very short. In the first five of those years I attempted suicide seriously several times. I was saved only because friends found me in time and had me taken to hospital, where I was treated against my will. If Ms MacDonald's bill had been in place then, and had covered the whole of Britain (I live in England) I would have qualified for what she terms "assistance" to die. I would most certainly have requested it. My mind was as sound then as it is now, and my wish to die was fixed.

What I couldn't foresee then was the support and help of my friends, most notably my closest friend/assistant, Colin. At times I begged him to help me die, but he refused, telling me again and again that he would stay with me and support me in any way that didn't involve killing. He kept his word, and is still with me, helping me as my 24 hour a day carer/assistant over 20 years later.

If I had been able to avail myself of a bill such as that proposed by Ms MacDonald 25 years ago, I would not now be writing this statement. If I had died then no one would ever have known that the doctors were wrong in thinking I had only a very short time left to live, and that my future would be much happier, even though my spinal pain is actually worse now than it was when I wanted to die.

Also nobody would have known that I would be missing the best years of my life, despite constant pain, and increasing frailty and disability.

I beg you to prevent this bill becoming law, and to give people who are as desperate now as I once was the chance to rediscover the value of their own lives.

Alison Davis
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