End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Dr Charles Warren

I am writing to express my opposition to the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill. I object both in principle and to the way that the Bill is drafted.

Firstly, as a matter of deeply held principle, I believe that all life is valuable and should be valued; this Bill directly undermines this widely-held view. Secondly, the Bill itself is extremely broad in its scope and worded vaguely. It lacks a definition of the crucial word 'intolerable', it fails to specify the means by which people's lives would be ended, and the breadth of the Bill would include people with non-threatening disabilities, placing vulnerable, old people at particular risk. The so-called safeguards contained in the Bill would be most unlikely to provide effective protection against abuses of such a law. Evidence from overseas (the Netherlands and the US state of Oregon) clearly demonstrates that abuses cannot be prevented.

The Bill seeks to 'enable a person to die with dignity and a minimum of distress'. There is no need for a new (and deeply flawed) law to facilitate this objective since it can already be provided for via high quality health care and palliative care. This is where efforts and funding should be directed if the current situation is judged to be defective in any way. Though motivated by compassion for the terminally ill, the Bill is an ill-conceived and dangerous proposal which would greatly increase the risks and stresses for the most vulnerable people in society, and would be offensive to many. I appeal to the Committee to note these strong objections.

Dr Charles Warren

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