We are writing to express our deep concern with regard to the **The End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill**. As a family who have lost a father, father in law and grandfather to a long, terminal illness in the last year, we find it upsetting and immoral that Scottish society could accept that some lives no longer have any meaning, value or worth and that assisted suicide or euthanasia might be the best ‘solution’ for such.

With reference to our father / father in law: he was told that he was terminally ill in the early 1990’s and was then, a decade later, told that he only had a few months to live. The thought that he would have been eligible for ‘assistance’ under this bill is difficult to comprehend. He indeed suffered much and spent the last two years of his life living in total dependence in a care home, having lost all mobility. His situation could have been described as ‘intolerable’ at times. He survived however until 2009 and saw the marriage of two of his children and the birth of his first four grandchildren years after he had been told that he had no real future. Despite pain, frustration and loss his life was full of meaning, value and worth – and not only to him but to all those who cared for and loved him. The Bill is intended to ‘enable a person to die with dignity and a minimum of distress’. As we experienced in our loss, this is already provided through good health care and, particularly, palliative medicine.

Many ill, and elderly people, such as our father / father in law, would be left vulnerable by this bill. It has been estimated that tens of thousands of seriously ill and disabled people throughout Scotland would fall within ‘its remit’. They might see their life’s savings been spent on their care and taken from their children and see themselves as a burden. This bill would send the message and put pressure on them to take up this ‘option’.

We can see no need for this bill. The idea of autonomy – ‘it’s my life and I can do what I like with it; and the suggestion that only by deciding the timing of one’s own death can one die with dignity are both flawed notions. Autonomy should not over-ride other considerations as if taking one’s own life had no impact on, or involvement with, anyone else. In reality, deciding to take one’s own life would have an impact on many people around the patient, particularly on the medical staff who would have to supply or administer the cocktail of drugs, and family members who might be against the assisted suicide.

We can see no desire for the bill. Our understanding is that the Scottish Parliament has already had two opportunities to discuss assisted suicide. On both occasions the legalization of assisted suicide was convincingly rejected. We also understand that the vast majority of medical practitioners and all the Royal Colleges of Medicine do not support assisted suicide.