I would like to give evidence on this bill and make the following points:

1) I disagree with assisted suicide as it by its’ nature it involves a second person in the ending of a life. I don’t believe anyone has the right to involve another in ending their life.

2) I believe it sends out the message that we do not value the life of the person who we assist to die- we would not let anyone else kill themselves so why the vulnerable or terminally ill?

3) I believe that elderly particularly struggle with the burden they may feel they are becoming to friends/carers/family. At such a vulnerable time they need a strong message that we want to love and care for them even more than before. I believe resources should be channelled to improving our palliative care. My Gran lived at home until she was 100 with help from carers- in hospital when she was dying she was in a lot of pain. We tried to see if a hospice bed was available but it wasn’t possible. This is not a case for assisted suicide but a case for more hospice provision and better palliative care made available in general wards. I have had the privilege to spend time with people in the last days of life and even though there were struggles and pain there was also insights, renewed bonds, healing and growth. Suffering is not necessarily negative.

I do feel elderly feel pressure at times. Think of the people who bought their own homes then when families were in difficulties sold to help their families and ended up without a home themselves. This happened to two people I knew who did everything they could for their sons/daughters in trouble. If we have any doubts that people might feel unnecessary pressure to end their life we should not make the option available.

In general as well as palliative care we need much greater help for carers. The pressure can be so intense they could unconsciously influence the person or the carers suffering could influence the person to want to end their life. The answer is not assisted suicide but greater help for carers. For example my friend who runs the 24 hour care for constantly battles with the poor hourly rate they can give the carers leading to a higher than necessary turn over of staff-better funding would help her work. Incidentally I and many others visit this friend who although she can barely speak and can only slowly communicate communicates everything important about life and living our life and making the most of our life.

I also feel some disabled people with learning difficulties could be easily influenced-think how carefully we take their evidence in court….we are only too aware how they could be unduly influenced or manipulated. We cannot open the possibility for this ( I work with young people with learning difficulties)
4) I am concerned that although safeguards are offered that over time these will slip away (see the change in abortion controls, Holland’s reduction in recording /monitoring assisted suicides)

5) Money for the verification process is money away from care

6) Sixteen today is very young and if there are developmental difficulties we could be talking about vulnerable people with very child like understanding.

It was once said that a country is judged on how it treats the young and elderly-let’s be a compassionate country who makes everyone feel valued up to the end.

Pauline Lynch