I am writing to urge you not to go ahead with this legislation. I believe that many vulnerable people, especially the elderly, might be made to feel their lives are 'intolerable' or that they are a burden to others and should therefore ask for assisted suicide. My mother suffered from depression in addition to physical disabilities, which may well have inclined her to choose this option if it were available. I am sure many others would be in that category. Please be aware of the mind-altering effects of some medication. We should allow doctors and nurses to do everything they can to improve quality of life and terminal care, but please not require them to assist suicide, which is so contrary to their calling. Every life is valuable and worth preserving.

I do understand that there are some clear cases of patients who might make this decision in their right minds without any pressure, and it would be preferable for them not to have to travel abroad to end their lives, but there are so many others for whom this legislation would be a real danger. Experience from countries which already have similar laws shows that abuses will inevitably occur, and this is a risk we should not be prepared to take. Please let us not go down this road.

Sarah Battams
12 May 2010