



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dear Constituents,

This Friday, 29th November, the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill will have its second reading in the House of Commons. As many of you know, this vote is being held as a 'free vote,' meaning MPs are not directed by party leaders on how to vote. Free votes are traditionally used in ethical matters that involve personal conscience, which this Bill clearly does.

Since the Bill was announced, hundreds of you have taken the time to contact me, via email and in person to give your own views. Thank you for taking the time to do that, I have read each email and am thankful for the thoughtful and respectful nature of those communications, I also believe that the debate held in the wider media has also been, on the whole, very respectful and shows how debates on issues can and should be held. Of the responses I've received so far, 52.5% are in favour, 47% are against, and 0.5% remain undecided.

As a constituent, I know you will be keen to know how I will vote, and I feel that I owe it to you to outline my thinking and ultimately my position before the vote this coming Friday.

Just like many of you, I too have seen first-hand many relatives, and some friends struggle in their final few months, despite excellent palliative care. With even the best palliative care not only have they still felt pain, but they have seen their freedom to enjoy life curtailed until they end up in a bed in those final weeks and days before sadly leaving us.

My overriding thinking is that individuals ultimately should have the right to choose how they leave this world and not have to slowly fade away in pain, discomfort or in mental anguish about how they once lived but are now unable to enjoy the quality of life that they want.

However, we clearly need to balance that right by safeguarding those that are vulnerable. Because of the title of the Bill, this legislation can only allow those with a terminal illness to benefit from ending their life with support. The Bill also requires two doctors and a High Court judge to sign off on the individual's decision, providing further safeguards.

If this Bill is progressed on Friday, it won't immediately become law. The Bill will then go to a committee for 'line by line' review, allowing an opportunity for amendments to be made and further scrutiny to be held. It will then come back before the House for its third reading, which if then passed would be sent for Royal Assent.

For these reasons, I intend to vote in favour of the Bill's second reading on Friday so that further debate and scrutiny can be held to ensure we get this legislation right. If it does pass, I will then be looking for best practice guidance to be required, in terms of the individual discussing their choice with those nearest to them, and to examine what we will be asking judges to consider so that we can have confidence that

coercion has not occurred.

If I am satisfied with that guidance, then I will be minded to continue to support the passage of this legislation to become law, but I will write a further open letter at that stage to keep you all up to date with my thinking.

I have given this vote much consideration, as well as reading your emails, letters, and messages, I have also attended drop-in sessions held in Parliament, looking at how such a law could be implemented, read briefings from lobby groups as well as researching materials from both sides of the debate. I have also examined my own beliefs and, whilst my own religion does not support this bill, I don't believe that my religion should play a deciding role on the freedom of choice for others who don't share my religion. Squaring that circle needs to fully sit with me and my own relationship with my religion.

I will continue to read any further correspondence I am sent before the vote on Friday, and whilst I know my vote in favour will disappoint some, I hope that we can all agree that this is a very difficult decision. My overriding hope is that this debate not only results in freedom for the individual to make their own decision, but that it also puts a focus on the need to continue to discuss the importance of palliative care and hospice funding for those that wish to avail themselves of that end of life care.

Yours



Lee Dillon MP
Member of Parliament for Newbury