

New Assisted Suicide Bill at Westminster

On Wednesday 26 May, Baroness Meacher introduced her Assisted Dying Bill in the House of Lords. It aims to change the law in England and Wales to legalise assisted suicide for terminally ill patients who have six months or less to live.

Read on to find out why you should oppose this Bill.

What is assisted suicide?

- Assisted suicide refers to a doctor helping a patient to commit suicide. Euthanasia is where doctors themselves administer the lethal injection or drug.
- Assisting someone to commit suicide is illegal under the 1961 Suicide Act. This applies to England and Wales.
- Decisions relating to stopping medical treatments or increasing pain relief that may accelerate someone's death are not the same thing as assisted suicide.



What does the Bible say?

Genesis 1:27 says that God made human beings in His own image, which means every life is immensely valuable. Throughout scripture He calls us to care for the most vulnerable so to prematurely end life is wrong. Jesus promises to give grace to those suffering who call on Him for strength. In the new heavens and earth all pain will cease.

What's wrong with assisted suicide?

No law can truly guarantee the safety of vulnerable people.

If this becomes a legal option, inevitably vulnerable people will feel pressured. How can we be sure that someone is choosing to end their life voluntarily or whether they're being persuaded or feeling obliged not to be 'a burden'? The right to die could become a duty to die. Instead, we should care for people until their life naturally ends.

Evidence from other countries and jurisdictions that have made this legal shows that it inevitably leads to euthanasia.

Even if that's not the intent of those first introducing such legislation, over time, safeguards are eroded and criteria broadened. Assisted suicide becomes normalised and numbers increase. We cannot assume that in the UK it would be any different.

It's not needed if we invest in making palliative care accessible for all.

Palliative care relieves symptoms of suffering and provides holistic care for a patient's needs. Rather than assisting people to die, there should be plans to ensure they have access to the best of end-of-life care when it's needed. Evidence from some places suggests legalising assisted suicide results in less palliative care being available.

Furthermore, Doctors who work closely with patients at the end of their lives are often opposed to assisted suicide, preferring palliative care.

What happens next?

Baroness Meacher's Bill is expected to be debated by Peers possibly in September, or October. While Private Members' Bills do not often become law, this Bill will still be seen by the pro-assisted suicide lobby as a step towards their goal.

We must stay vigilant and be ready to respond.

What can you do?



PRAY:

Use our prayer resource *Ten Ways to Pray about End of Life*, and share it with your church. Contact us to order free copies of this resource.



WRITE:

Please consider writing to Members of the House of Lords and to your MP, asking them to oppose any change in the law. Guidance on how to do this can be found on the Parliament website: parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-an-mp-or-lord/



FIND OUT MORE:

Sign up to receive CARE's regular, weekly email Impact Direct at care.org.uk/join-us, and read more about this issue on our website: care.org.uk/cause/assisted-suicide

