

The Assisted Dying bill is set to fail, and I am very glad to hear it.

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I do not want doctors to be able to prescribe a lethal dose of medicine to a person to end their own life. It will undermine our trust in doctors and the NHS, and it will create unbearable ethical dilemmas for providers of hospice and nursing home care. Legal experts are certain that, if passed, there will be legal challenges, to extend Assisted Dying to people who are not terminally ill or who have a projected 6 months to live. These challenges will succeed, opening it up for people with mental illness, anorexia, long-term neurological conditions and disabilities, as they have in every jurisdiction that allows medically assisted suicide.

Kim Leadbetter MP oversaw the removal of the protections for people (including minors) in these categories at the Committee Stage, and so I believe she bears responsibility for the increased scrutiny taking place in the House of Lords.

Progressive Jews generally argue for more freedom and for more autonomy. I understand that the doctors who support Assisted Death want their patients to be able to choose. But no human being lives in a vacuum. This law, once passed, would have an irreversible impact on how all of us think about illness and death. These subtle social changes, on top of the expensive burden of care for the elderly and people with disabilities, will inevitably mean that the exercise of one person's autonomy will impact on the death (and lives), of everyone else.

Autonomy must have its limits. Personal freedom should not come at any cost. If an Assisted Dying law was passed, it will have the undesirable impact of setting up a hierarchy of those who qualify and those who do not.

Sometimes, society and the law must protect us from our own desires, from our desperation and our vulnerability. Jewish law *-halachah-* is already compassionate; anyone who takes their own life is not considered a deliberate suicide unless their death meets a stringent set of conditions. This means that, from a Jewish perspective, any person who is seriously ill, in fear, or in any altered state, is not competent to choose to end their own life. That person cannot therefore fulfil the proposed criteria of demonstrating a clear and settled decision, according to the framework set out in the proposed legislation.

This means that from a Jewish perspective, nobody with terminal illness has the capacity to agree to ending their own life.

Jewish law is maximally compassionate, describing the actions of a person who takes their own life as life as beyond understanding. This is correct. Choosing an Assisted Death means imposing a demand upon doctors and family to accept, to understand and to support. Sometimes, it is difficult to say 'no', particularly for Progressives. That is why I am pleased that this bill will fail. I hope that Members of Parliament have acquired a deeper understanding of the issues, should the proposed legislation return to Parliament in the future.