

Dear Mr Buckland, Ms Harman, Mr Hunt, and Sir Bob,

We are writing to set out the case for an inquiry into the UK's laws on assisted dying, and urge you to instigate such a review or to call on Parliament to do so.

We are prompted to write by the news that Paul Lamb has lost his legal case that sought to challenge the existing law. His loss means that it is now probable that there will be no further litigation on assisted dying. In other words, the matter is firmly one for Parliament to resolve.

It has now been half a decade since Parliament examined legislation on assisted dying, and fifteen years since it formally scrutinised the issue via Lord Joffe's Select Committee. In these years, the evidence has materially changed, and that new evidence necessitates a fresh review.

Firstly, there has been a profound change in the context in which the law operates. Last year the Assisted Dying Coalition found that the number of UK citizens travelling to Switzerland for an assisted death has increased sixfold over the last 15 years. Yet, *The Economist* has independently reported that our police are increasingly turning a blind eye to such journeys, raising serious questions about the effectiveness of our current law in preventing the potential coercion of vulnerable people.

Secondly, there has been a significant shift in professional medical opinion and within the disability community. As of this year, in one of the largest surveys of medical opinion ever, the British Medical Association reported that half of doctors personally support legal assisted dying, with just 39% opposed, and if the law is to change, a majority favour changing it for both the terminally ill and incurably suffering. Further, Parkinson's UK, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the Motor Neurone Disease Association have adopted neutral stances on this important issue.

Beyond this, successive countries, including Canada, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, and parts of the United States and Australia, have changed or are due to change their law since 2015. Moreover, several other nations, including Ireland, are actively considering similar proposals, reflecting that such changes can be achieved in a safe and compassionate way.

We recognise that there are weighty and legitimate concerns about changing the law on assisted dying, and do not want to shy away from these challenges. However, an inquiry or call for evidence would present the best opportunity to explore these difficult questions in an objective and sensitive way.

The UK is falling behind the rest of the world and our laws on assisted dying are letting down our citizens. We urge you to launch what is now a long overdue inquiry.

Crispin Blunt MP

Baroness Bakewell DBE