



Milford Care Centre,
Castletroy,
Limerick
www.impca.ie

Deputy Carol Nolan
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

23 September 2020

RE: Private Member's Bill to legislate for Assisted Suicide in Ireland

Dear Deputy,

We write to you as individual specialist medical practitioners and members of the Irish Palliative Medicine Consultants' Association (IPMCA), to voice our serious concerns regarding the proposal to remove the existing legislative safeguards that protect our citizens in respect of assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Key points:

1. We are opposed to any form of legislation for assisted dying, assisted suicide or euthanasia in Ireland;
2. Compassion, advocacy and support are at the heart of the palliative care that is delivered across Ireland to those who are suffering as a result of advanced illness;
3. The intended and inevitable unintended consequences of the proposed legislation are stark and unthinkable;
4. There should be no role for medical practitioners in deciding eligibility for, or in the delivery of, any form of assisted suicide or euthanasia in Ireland.

Based on our collective experience, earned through thousands of care interventions for patients and their families annually, we strongly oppose any proposed changes to the current legislative status quo on the grounds that:

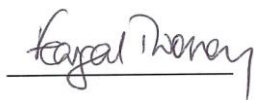
- By virtue of our caring for many patients and their families we have a keen awareness of the suffering experienced by some people. Harnessing this awareness, and with a spirit of deep care, support of and advocacy for our patients, we know that even the severe physical or psychological distress experienced by a minority can be managed to their satisfaction;
- The proposed bill is deeply flawed in several aspects including, most shockingly, that both assisted suicide and euthanasia be permissible;
- Based on international evidence there are no safeguards that can be put in place that will meaningfully restrict the use and misuse of such legislation:

- The High Court ruling in the Marie Fleming case was very clear in this regard: *Even with the most rigorous systems of legislative checks and safeguards, it would be impossible to ensure that the aged, the disabled, the poor, the unwanted, the rejected, the lonely, the impulsive, the financially compromised and emotionally vulnerable would not avail of this option to avoid a sense of being a burden to their family and society'*
- International evidence tells us that legislation intended to allow for the killing of adults suffering pain as a result of advanced illness has resulted in the killing of adults with no life-limiting illness, those who have untreated mental health issues, those with dementia, those who are blind, deaf or merely 'tired of life' and in the killing of infants and children
- The proposed legislation will completely alter the traditional doctor–patient relationship, where each party is assured that the doctor will always strive to do the most positive good and will refrain from causing harm;
- It is incongruous to us that while significant health & social care resources are invested to try to prevent, and support those left behind by, the over 400 suicides by citizens of our country each year, this Bill proposes a mechanism by which the state would support citizens to actively end their own lives or legalise that others might deliberately kill them.

In particular, we would like to bring to your attention the significant harms that the decriminalisation of assisted suicide would likely have on the most vulnerable in society, as well as on healthcare professionals, patients and their families. We believe that assisted suicide would represent an irreversible, regressive change in healthcare policy in Ireland.

We would welcome the opportunity to share our practical understanding of this difficult issue and to elaborate on our concerns regarding the proposed legislation. Please feel free to contact Dr. Feargal Twomey or any of the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,



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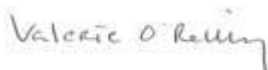
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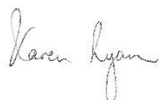
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About the IPMCA: The Irish Palliative Medicine Consultants' Association (IPMCA) is the official association for Consultants in Palliative Medicine in the Republic of Ireland. The aims of the Association are to:

- Promote the appropriate development of specialist palliative care services in the Republic of Ireland and to provide medical leadership to these services;
- Promote medical education and research appropriate to palliative medicine;
- Act as the formal representative body for consultants in palliative medicine in the Republic of Ireland; and
- Provide a supportive and advisory forum for new and existing consultants in palliative medicine in the Republic of Ireland