

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

23rd October 2018

John Confrontment

RE: DIANA JOHNSON MP'S TEN MINUTE RULE BILL – ABORTION.

Thank you for contacting me recently about abortion; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

Abortion is a highly sensitive issue, regardless of where your view lies and one where it is important that the matter is considered with due care and respect.

I would also like to make clear that the Government's policy is to allow a free vote on matters of conscience, such as abortion, and I listened carefully to both sides of the debate, when this came before the House earlier today, before voting against the Bill.

Personally, I have concerns about the points raised in Diana Johnson MP's Ten Minute Rule Bill; I do not support the repealing of sections 58 and 59 of the *Offences Against the Persons Act 1861* for several reasons. Primarily, repealing those two sections does not solve the issue of abortion in Northern Ireland, as without any new provisions it offers no safeguards for women, and would impact on England and Wales, as well as Northern Ireland.

The *Abortion Act 1967* provides defences against the criminal law offences contained in the 1861 Act. If these offences were removed then abortion would in effect be decriminalised and no legal framework would be in place, including no gestational time limits. A new legal framework would be needed to replace those provisions, which is rightly a devolved matter, which locally accountable politicians in Northern Ireland should have the opportunity to debate and consider.

The measures in the Bill also go a lot further than current debate in Northern Ireland, so it is important legislation is not imposed on Northern Ireland and we allow local politicians the opportunity to represent the views of the people of Northern Ireland. This is why this Government's priority is to restore devolved government at the earliest opportunity – an approach I wholeheartedly support, as it is right that these matters are decided by locally elected representatives in Northern Ireland.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

Tom

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE