



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

17th June 2020

New Comment,

**RE: ABORTION (CLEFT LIP, CLEFT PALATE AND CLUBFOOT) BILL -
EDM 521**

Thank you for contacting me recently about abortion, with specific reference to Early Day Motion (EDM) 521, which relates to the *Abortion (Cleft Lip, Cleft Palate and Clubfoot) Bill*; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

Notwithstanding the fact that as a Government Minister I am unable to sign EDMs, in any event, I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system, and I think it is much more effective to raise concerns directly with Ministers, both verbally, and in writing, rather than signing EDMs.

However, I completely understand what an incredibly emotive issue this is, and I appreciate the strength of feeling on both sides of the abortion debate. It is for this reason that, as with other matters of conscience, the Government adopts a neutral stance on abortion, allowing Conservative MPs to vote freely according to their moral, ethical, or religious beliefs. This is a convention which I support wholeheartedly.

Not every pregnancy goes to plan and foetal abnormalities of varying degrees of severity occur. Women need support and information to reach an informed decision about how to proceed. Health professionals must adopt a supportive and non-judgemental approach regardless of whether the decision is to terminate or continue the pregnancy.

The approach to abortion in Great Britain is set out in the *Abortion Act 1967*, which states that two doctors must certify that, in their opinion, a request for an abortion meets at least one and the same ground laid out in the Act. These grounds include “*risk to the life of the pregnant woman*”, and “*substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped*”.

I welcome that guidance for doctors on how to comply with the Act has been issued, which stipulates that registered medical practitioners should be able to show how they have considered the particular facts and circumstances of a case when forming their opinion. Full details can be found online at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-doctors-on-compliance-with-the-abortion-act



Of course, should a debate on this Bill come forward in future, I would listen carefully to the views of my constituents, read the relevant scientific and medical arguments, and follow the debate closely, before finally deciding how to vote, as is the appropriate way to approach a conscience matter such as this.

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**