TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

12th April 2022

Dear Constituent,

RE: CHOICE AT THE END OF LIFE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the APPG on Choice at the End of Life's meeting. I have read your comments on this issue with interest.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the meeting owing to prior parliamentary commitments. However, I can assure you that I recognise the strength of feeling on this issue. Coping with terminal illness is distressing and difficult, both for the patient and their families. These cases are truly moving and evoke the highest degree of compassion and emotion.

Assisting or encouraging suicide is a criminal offence under Section 2 of the *Suicide Act 1961*, for which the maximum penalty is 14 years' imprisonment. I am aware that the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) published guidelines primarily concerned with advising Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutors about the factors which they need to consider when deciding whether it is in the public interest to prosecute a person for assisting or encouraging another to commit suicide.

The House of Commons has discussed the DPP's guidelines and these were unanimously commended as being a compassionate and measured way of dealing with one of the most emotionally charged crimes in the statute book. However, they do not change the law; assisting or encouraging suicide has not been decriminalised.

The DPP further clarified the CPS' policy on the likelihood of prosecution of healthcare professionals, to specify that the relationship of care will be the important aspect and it will be necessary to consider whether the suspect may have been in a position to exert some influence on the victim.

I believe the application of the law should be flexible enough to distinguish the facts and the circumstances of one case from another. To this end, the DPP's policy offers important and sensitive guidance.

I fully accept that suicide, assisting, or encouraging suicide, assisted dying and euthanasia, are all subjects on which it is entirely possible for people to hold widely different but defensible opinions. This is why the substance of the law in this area is not a matter of party politics, but of conscience, and any vote would be a free one should the law in this area ever be altered.

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 PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE