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GIVING THE CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE NEWS AND ISSUES OF THE DAY



Back Bill and save right to a Catholic conscience

Catholic peer claims medics leaving profession over fears they are losing vital legal protections

Nick Benson

The state has a duty to safeguard individual professionals' conscience rights, particularly in the field of medicine, Lord David Alton of Liverpool has declared.

The influential Catholic peer's comments came as a Bill to protect the rights of medical professionals passed its second reading in the House of Lords. The Conscientious Objection (Medical Activities) Bill was introduced by Baroness Nuala O'Loan after a string of concerns were voiced by medical professionals, that they were suffering "serious disadvantage and discrimination" for their beliefs over abortion and other medical activities.

Baroness O'Loan also claimed young healthcare professionals are leaving the UK as they cannot carry out certain tasks, arguing there is a need to "re-establish legal protection" for medical conscientious objections.

The Bill would apply to the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment, human embryo research and activity linked to preparing, supporting or performing an abortion.

Lord Alton congratulated Baroness

science is not founded on "whim or personal preference", but it provides "meaningful conviction", allowing people to structure their own ethical identity and exercise their judgment.

"The state has a duty to safeguard the conscience of individual professionals, as well as providing an effective healthcare service," he said. "The denial of conscience is an attribute, indeed the hallmark, of an illiberal society because it is an act of coercion."

Lord Alton noted that Baroness O'Loan's Bill was "consistent with the tradition" of Greek physician Hippocrates. "He refused to accommodate those who believed that 'care' and 'kill' could be used as synonyms," he said.

A day prior to the reading, Lord Alton had attended a meeting in St Bride's Hall, Belfast, where he told a capacity audience from across the political and religious spectrum that "100,000 people – five per cent of Northern Ireland's population – are alive today because abortion is only permitted in life threatening circumstances".

By contrast, "in England a baby is aborted every three minutes," he added.

During the meeting the peer also set out his support for Baroness O'Loan's Bill.

He stressed that the high calling of midwifery "should not cost someone their job when they refuse to facilitate the ending of the lives of the unborn.

He cited Glasgow midwives Mary Doogan and Connie Wood who went all the way to the UK Supreme Court in 2014 in a fight for the right to conscientious objection, only to lose their jobs due to their Catholic pro-life beliefs.

Describing their sacking as "coercive and deeply illiberal", Lord Alton explained that Baroness O'Loan's Bill "would stop such things happening again".

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New fans for opera singer Carly



Carly Paoli, the classical singer who provided the voice for Pope Francis' Jubilee Year of Mercy, found some new fans when she treated the Chelsea Pensioners to a special concert.

The acclaimed English singer performed the concert in the Pensioners' Club at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. **More on page 4**

End rationing of cancer care for Alfie says charity chief

Nick Benson

Parents should never have to worry about funding their child's cancer treatment, the president of a cancer charity has stated.

Professor Ray Donnelly, president of the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation and founder of Pause for Hope – special services for those affected by cancer, made his statement after Tory MP Kwasi Kwarteng urged ministers to rethink their treatment for the childhood cancer neuroblastoma.

Spelthorne MP Mr Kwarteng made his comments as he raised the case of teenage constituent Alfie Ward, who is battling neuroblastoma for the third time.

Mr Kwarteng said the existing policy not to treat survivors of neuroblastoma who relapse was "very harsh" and put families under huge pressure to raise money for treatment.

MPs heard that neuroblastoma – the same type of cancer that killed popular football mascot Bradley Lowery – is the third most common type of childhood cancer, affecting around 100 children every year.

Mr Kwarteng added that Alfie's parents were now attempting to raise around £600,000 so he can receive further treatment.

Prof Donnelly reiterated Mr Kwarteng's call, asserting that economics should never come into the question. "Parents should never have to raise significant sums of money to get treatment for their child who has cancer," he told *The Universe*.

"In any case most parents cannot even begin to do this. Economics should never determine whether a child should be treated for cancer."

Prof Donnelly said that such treatment should always be made available.

"If effective therapies are available they should be offered, even if considered only palliative, as more effective cancer treatments are coming on stream all the time."

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