

Email 22 March 2018

Dear Member of the House of Lords,

I am writing to you on behalf of Doctors for Choice UK about the Committee stage of the Conscientious Objection (Medical Activities) Bill in the House of Lords tomorrow (23 March 2018).

Doctors for Choice supports current legal provisions that allow medical practitioners to opt out of providing treatment that conflict with their personal and religious beliefs - see our attached position statement on this issue for more information.

However, we believe that extending the activities to which a healthcare professional could claim a conscientious objection from 'hands on treatment' to 'any supervision, delegation, planning or supporting of staff in respect of that activity' could have a hugely adverse effect on healthcare provision in the UK.

For example, ward sisters could refuse to manage staff rotas for staff members who perform abortions, senior doctors with management responsibilities could refuse to manage budgets, staffing, and training for junior colleagues who participate in abortion provision, administrators and healthcare professionals could refuse to take calls from other departments or primary care centres to book a woman in for an abortion procedure.

This would place particular pressure on NHS obstetrics and gynaecology provision which are already short-staffed and who often provide abortion services for the most difficult to treat women – including women whose wanted baby has a fatal fetal abnormality.

We urge you to listen to the debate tomorrow and to speak **against** the amendments that aim to limit women's access to abortion care e.g.

- 2. (which includes management in CO)

and speak **for** amendments that aim to ensure access to safe and legal abortion for the one in three UK women that need it, e.g.

- 1. (which keeps the definition of participation as hands-on rather than including supervision, delegation, planning, and supporting)
- 15. (which places additional requirements on people exercising CO to ensure patients still get the best care)

We do not support putting any kind of description of fetal anomaly in legislation (as amendment 13 proposes).

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

With very best wishes,

Dr Jayne Kavanagh

Co-chair, Doctors for Choice UK