

Health and Social Care Committee
Human Transplantation (Wales) Bill
HT(Org)24 - Catholic Medical Association

Mark Drakeford
Chair of Health Committee,

Dear Mr Drakeford

I would be extremely grateful if you are able to accept this late submission. I do apologise that I have missed the dead line but the Draft Bill on Human Transplantation in Wales has only recently come to our notice.

I am writing as the President of the Catholic Medical Association and as it happens we recently discussed amongst ourselves the difficult problem of Brain Stem death and Organ Transplantation and the problem of valid consent. While we are all totally supportive of the value of organ donation, we feel that it is vital that in principle it has to remain as a voluntary gift, adhering to the fundamental meaning of donation, either at the time from a living donor, or in advance and fully documented, with donors who have died.

It is well documented how difficult it will be for emergency staff to support relatives if this donating organs had not been in their way of thinking (contrasted to the comfort that good donation can bring families in knowing that the tragic death of their loved one was not utterly in vain, and that some poor suffering soul has benefitted). How can the State really say that it owns the bodies of its citizens? There must be more successful ways of encouraging people to fill in their Donor Cards.

Within the effort to improve donor card uptake, a proper, fair and up to date presentation of Brain Stem Death is urgently needed, as an amount of suspicion surrounds this and is probably preventing some publicly spirited people from signing. Factors such as the recent media coverage of the work of Professor Adrian Owen in Canada who has managed to communicate with "PVS" patients must be alerting the public to the difficulty in assessing the degree of residual brain function in severely brain damaged patients, and instilling some degree of apprehension and uncertainty.

We would be delighted to be of help to you if further facts surrounding this difficult subject from the Catholic Christian perspective are required.

Yours very sincerely

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