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Hospice of St. Mary of Furness

7 January 2004

The Right Hon John Hutton MP
22 Hartington Street
Barrow in Furness
Cumbria
LA14 5SL

Dear Sir

PROPOSED NEW GAMBLING BILL AND ITS PERCEIVED ADVERSE EFFECT ON ST. MARY'S HOSPICE LOTTERY

You will be aware that St. Mary's Hospice is a registered charity based in Ulverston, which provides specialist medical and nursing care for people from South Lakeland and Furness suffering cancer and other life-threatening diseases. Since the hospice opened in 1989 literally thousands of local people have benefited from our services.

You will also be aware of the vagaries associated with charitable fundraising and because of this in 1996/97 we had to close our patient day-care service and make some nursing staff redundant. In 1998 we started a weekly lottery, which has proved extremely successful and along with other fund-raising initiatives enabled us to reopen our day-care facilities. The lottery has brought an element of stability to our hospice fundraising and now accounts for a significant part of our income.

I am writing to you to express our concerns over the proposed new Gambling Bill which is currently before the joint committee. (chaired by John Greenway), under the pre-legislative scrutiny procedure. We are particularly concerned about some aspects of the proposed Gambling Bill which we feel will have a direct and adverse effect upon our lottery activities.

To operate a legal lottery we are required to:-

1. Register with the Gaming Board
2. Submit committee members for vetting
3. Submit weekly lottery returns to the Gaming Board
4. Meet strict time limits for each return
5. Follow strict guidelines in terms of expenses & prizes
6. Ensure that at least 20% goes to the good cause
7. Cannot be sold to or by anyone under 16 years
8. Cannot be sold in the street or public place unless from a kiosk, etc..
(the list is by no means exhaustive)

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We support the imposition of strict guidelines, which we believe demonstrates the integrity of our lottery and aids the prevention of unlawful lotteries.

It appears that under the proposed new Gambling Bill, the Government intend to permit commercial organisations to operate pseudo-lotteries in the guise of prize draws. Participants are required to undertake a simple question and answer process with the majority getting the answer right and the winner subsequently decided by a lottery.

There are virtually no restrictions on operating these type of pseudo-lotteries, viz:-

1. No registration required
2. No limits on stake money, prizes or expenses
3. No returns or accountability
4. No donation required to a good cause
5. No restriction on age
6. No restrictions as to selling in public places, etc.,
(again the list is by no means exhaustive)

We are concerned that this apparent 'loophole' in the legislation will be exploited to maximum effect by some commercial organisations leading to a proliferation of these types of promotion not only in areas where we are prohibited from operating but also in our own 'back-yard'.

It appears that the Government is intent on ignoring the recommendations of the Gambling Review Body, the Gaming Board and the Lotteries Council by permitting the operation of unlicensed lotteries for commercial gain provided they contain "a degree of skill or knowledge", (e.g., who works in a police station?).

We are greatly concerned that these kinds of promotions provide unfair competition and will have an adverse effect on our lottery fundraising activities.

I am seeking your support in helping us to preserve a vital source of income by asking you to speak on our behalf as the new Gambling Bill goes through the various committee stages. I would be pleased to meet you to explain our position in more detail.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Campbell', written in a cursive style.

Carol Campbell (Mrs)
Bursar