

2024.06.25

### **3.10 Deputy K.M. Wilson of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the proposed changes to the Termination of Pregnancy (Jersey) Law 1997 (OQ.127/2024)**

Further to the Health and Social Services Panel's Quarterly Public Hearing held on 6th June 2024, will the Minister explain why the proposed changes to the Termination of Pregnancy (Jersey) Law 1997 in relation to women in Jersey who are on work permits have been prioritised above other changes?

#### **Deputy T. Binet (The Minister for Health and Social Services):**

The answer to this is very simple. A short while ago I was advised that the Women's Health Political Advisory Group had identified this matter as a high priority, and it is something that I and Deputy Howell also thought to be very important. Accordingly, I took the opportunity to make an announcement to the effect that I would be addressing the matter as soon as possible. As it happens, shortly after that I received an email from Deputy Feltham who very kindly attached a copy of the minutes of the Women's Health Political Advisory Group's meeting of 16th June which at item 2(a) in relation to this matter expressed the desire to seek a one-off law amendment to remove the current residency requirement by the end of 2025 pre-purdah. The minutes go on to state the following: "The removal of the current legal residency requirement before the next Government term was felt to be of higher priority to enable the provision of a service for women on short-term visas who are not ordinary residents and have not been here for 90 days." It was very pleasing to see that the Women's Health Political Advisory Group were indeed keen on this matter being prioritised.

#### **3.10.1 Deputy K.M. Wilson:**

One of the concerns I think that the Minister has not addressed is how he is prioritising the development of this law when we have a constant flip-flapping about what is important. When is he going to produce a piece of legislation that supports women to manage their own fertility in a way that is acceptable and when will we expect to see that legislation coming forward?

#### **Deputy T. Binet:**

I am not entirely sure that that relates directly to the question and I certainly do not know where the evidence is of any flip-flapping. I have said quite categorically that I have been advised in the first instance by the women's health group, and I continue to take that approach, as I am sure is Deputy Howell who looks after these matters more closely. I do not see that there is much more that we can do than be guided by these good people.

#### **3.10.2 Deputy J. Renouf:**

I think for evidence of flip-flapping we might say that in his hustings the Minister said in response to a question from Deputy Jeune about continuing the termination of pregnancy review: "On the face of it that sounds very sensible, I would assume that the answer would have to be yes." At the Health and Social Security Panel, which Deputy Wilson has already referred to, Deputy Howell said that the termination of pregnancy work had been stopped for lack of resources, then at the weekend the Minister said he was trying to get it back on track. Can he confirm exactly what is happening with the termination of pregnancy review?

#### **Deputy T. Binet:**

Once again I am not sure that that relates to the question but I am very, very happy to answer it. We have limited resources. I have made it plain that I am very keen to see all of these issues being prioritised. We did lose somebody from the Policy Department recently, I am using my best endeavours to get that person replaced, and I am putting in a request for an additional person in order to take these matters forward. I have been clear about that all along and I do not see there is any ambiguity about anything that I have said.

**3.10.3 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:**

Just to follow on from that question, when does the Minister expect to have clarity on that position, when he will know whether those attempts to find additional resources have been approved and therefore we know for definite that the work can go ahead?

**Deputy T. Binet:**

Once again, I do not think that is totally related to the question and I will not know until I know. As I say, I am using my best endeavours; I can do no more than that.