

Written evidence from Mr Alan Swanborough [HAB0199]

As a Christian who firmly supports marriage, I request that the Government will not implement the proposals suggested in the above Bill for the following reasons.

1. I believe that the public commitment made in wedding vows gives families great stability. The Government should recognise and promote this, rather than undermine marriage by offering equivalent rights to those who choose not to be committed.
2. Parental separation is far higher for cohabitation than for marriage. It is reported that 53% of children of cohabiting parents will experience their parents' separation by the age of five, but this is only 15 per cent for children of married parents. Family breakdown is exceedingly expensive for society, costing the public purse over £50bn each year. This will only worsen if the special legal status of marriage is not maintained and promoted.
3. Creating another additional relationship status is completely unnecessary. Couples either choose to get married or not. Civil partnerships are available for couples seeking some legal protections from a committed legally binding relationship. Inheritance concerns can be dealt with by writing a will, for example. Extending rights to an extra 'cohabiting' group undermines marriage and creates confusion, and a need for even more legislation to define this new status. There are no difficulties that cohabiting couples can't already address through other means.
4. Marriage makes a clear distinction between couples in a permanent relationship and those who share a home as housemates or lodgers. Giving special legal status to cohabitation would blur these lines, and create all sorts of opportunities for coercion of vulnerable individuals for financial gain.

June 2021