

Written evidence from Simon Dennis [HAB0331]

Rights of Cohabiting Partners

The most vital relationship required by society which best protects both children and their parents is a lifetime legal commitment of marriage. Sadly, society has been actively belittling marriage for many years, and we all now can see the growing problems this is causing.

Despite a reduction in the total percentage of couples getting married, studies show that marriages have far higher rates of longevity, greatly reduced likelihood of problems of financial difficulties, and children more greatly protected from their own problems with relationships.

Family breakdown brings poverty and instability for children especially, costing the country billions of pounds in social services costs. I believe this annually exceeds £50 billion.

Promoting additional rights for cohabiters will simply feed the societal issues that are causing such general breakdown in family stability. Money would far better be spent assisting married couples to remain so, for the benefit of their children and society as a whole. If couples wish to cohabit, they should not be provided with the benefits of the most stable and beneficial form of relationships, namely the marriage commitment.

Sadly, about 15% of young children (under fives) will experience family break-up even when the parents are married. However, that figure is well over 50% for cohabiting couples.

The protected legal status of Marriage with its rights should therefore not be diluted by encouraging relationships which do more damage and cause ever increasing national expense in social services. If couples want the benefits pertaining to marriage, they should enter into a legal marriage commitment which requires that they publicly commit to a lifelong relationship.

It is therefore right that instead of cheapening the marriage commitment by promoting those with no lifetime relationship intent, marriage itself should be lauded as the best for society, best for children and best for the parents too.

My own direct experience of over 45 years of marriage is that at a certain point 30 year ago when I chose to leave my wife, the strength of the marriage commitment vows we had made was a powerful deterrent to continuing on a path which would have meant break-up of our family home, sale of the house, financial difficulties and permanent unimaginable difficulties for our children. All those issues were dissolved away because of the very different bond that a marriage commitment had brought us.

After a couple of years, that original commitment enabled us to come back to the promises we originally made and avoid the pain that was in store had I not continued on that path.

It is therefore vital that for the overall good of society, and with the benefit of many hundreds of years of proof, that marriage should not further be devalued by

pretending that the fruit of promoting alternative legally uncommitted relationships will not produce anything except greater problems, higher costs to society, and greater numbers of damaged children.

July 2021