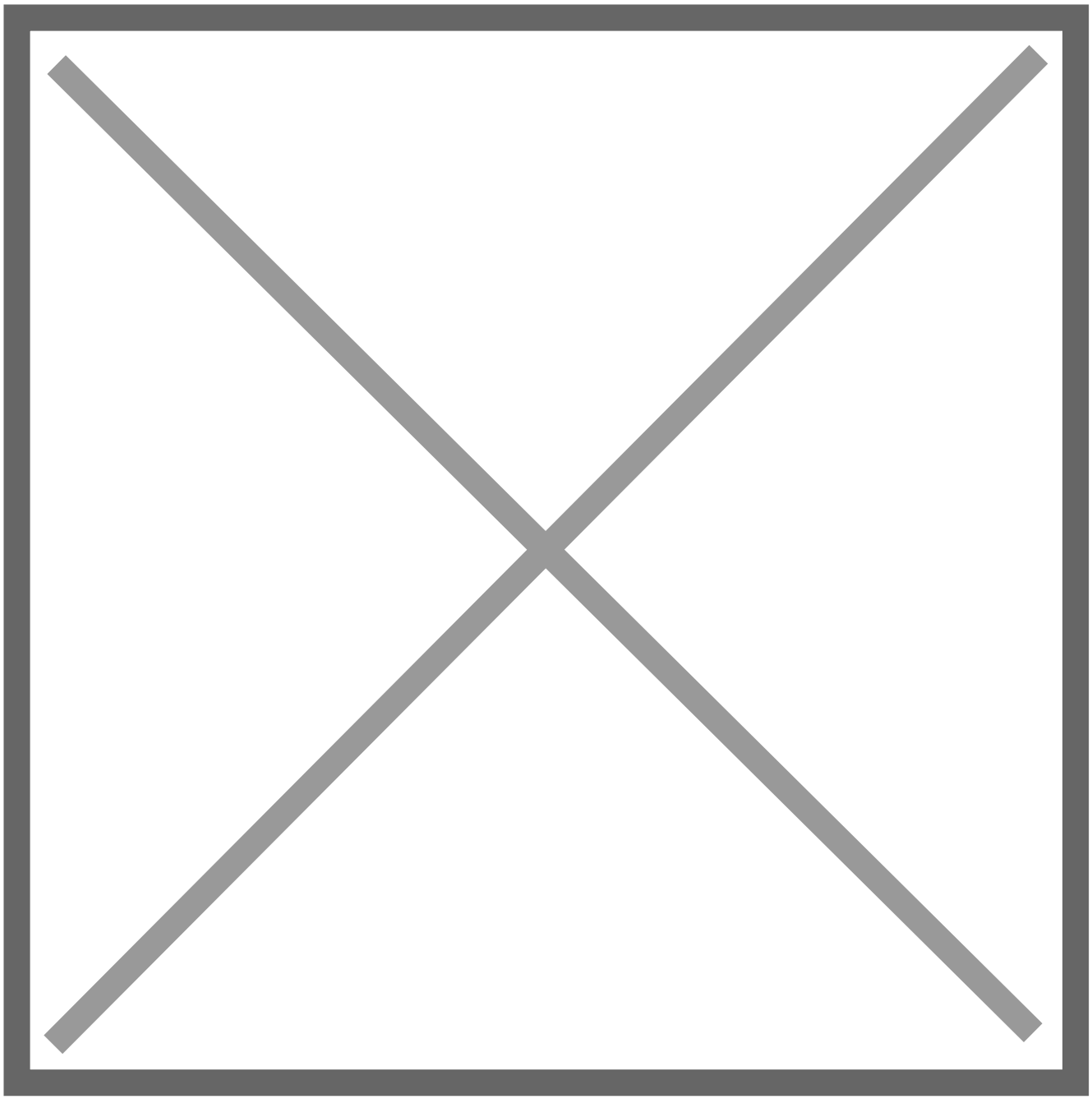
News



Demonstrators against assisted dying display signs in front of the Houses of Parliament in London Sept. 11, 2026, as U.K. lawmakers voted 286-270 to reject a bill that would allow terminally ill adults in England and Wales to choose to end their lives. (OSV News/Reuters/Jack Taylor)

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Liverpool, England — September 15, 2026
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The Catholic Church in England and Wales has welcomed the defeat of a bill to legalize assisted suicide.

The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill was rejected by members of Parliament by 286 votes to 270 after a Sept. 11 debate at second reading.

The bill would have allowed adults who are terminally ill, and deemed to have fewer than six months left to live, to procure lethal drugs for suicides overseen by medics.

Afterwards, Archbishop John Sherrington of Liverpool, the lead bishop for life issues for the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, thanked all who had fought against the legislation, brought in a private member's bill by Member of Parliament Lauren Edwards, who is in the Labour Party.

"I would like to express my gratitude to those MPs who voted against the Bill and the many people from across society who made their voices heard — doctors, legal professionals, disability groups, other faith communities and those of no faith who stood up for the dignity and sanctity of every life," Sherrington said in a Sept. 11 statement posted on the bishops' conference website.

"Throughout this debate, we have argued that our response to those facing serious illness, disability or the challenges of old age should be rooted in solidarity, care and

respect," said Sherrington, adding that the "true measure of a compassionate society is its willingness to support people through difficult circumstances rather than encouraging them to end their lives."

"We remain convinced that the most effective way to address suffering at the end of life is through greater access to excellent palliative and end-of-life care," the archbishop emphasized, saying that he hoped "all the sick and frail find comfort in the support of their loved ones, and the love of God, which transcends all suffering."

The bill was fifth attempt in 12 years to decriminalize assisted suicide, a practice which in the U.K. is punishable by a prison sentence of up to 14 years under the 1961 Suicide Act.

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The draft legislation was identical to the first draft of a bill introduced into the House of Commons in 2024 by Kim Leadbeater — but which in 2025 ran out of parliamentary time in the House of Lords, Britain's upper chamber, in the face of some 1,200 amendments tabled by peers gravely concerned about inadequate protections and other flaws.

Both bills were opposed by prominent organizations, including the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Nursing and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, and scores of disability rights and mental health groups.

Andy Burnham, the prime minister and Catholic, abstained from the vote but Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch voted against it. Among those MPs to speak in the debate was Ashley Dalton, a Catholic Labour MP with stage 4 incurable metastatic breast cancer, who pleaded with fellow legislators to either abstain or vote against the legislation.

She described her fear and anxiety in the face of terminal illness and said: "I do not know how long I will live. ... I live between scans, in nine to 12-week blocks of time. The last scan might have shown that the disease is stable, but the next scan might show that it is growing again."

"At some point, we will either run out of drugs to try, or I will be too poorly to tolerate them — then I die. It could be months. It could be years," she said.

"In the campaign around this bill, though, it seems to me that it is being implied that a person with a terminal illness will have a dreadful, painful death unless they have access to assisted dying. That is simply not true; palliative care in the U.K. is excellent," she underlined.

Dalton emphasized that "far too many people" do not have access to the palliative care they need, "but the idea that it is not possible to alleviate pain and discomfort is false," she said.

"People have been terrorized — I have been terrorized — with tales of people vomiting up their own feces, as though this is commonplace during death. It is vanishingly rare," she said, rebuking some of the arguments presented in the public square by supporters of the bill.

"Bowel obstructions are more common, but they are treatable. I know — I have had one. It is nothing short of irresponsible to scaremonger people like me into believing our deaths will be horrific when all the evidence suggests that, with access to good palliative care, deaths are, on the whole, gentle."

Alisdair Hungerford-Morgan of Right to Life UK, a pro-life group, afterward described the vote as "a remarkable victory for the most vulnerable in our society."

"They deserve protection and care, not a pathway to suicide," he said in a Sept. 11 statement sent by email to OSV and posted online.

He added that after "a two-year-long national debate, the country has decided to reject assisted suicide, settling the issue for a generation."

The defeat of the bill follows the failure of a similar attempt to legalize assisted suicide in the Scottish Parliament in March.