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## **NHS Privatisation in the Health and Care Bill**

I am concerned that this Bill represents a rushed, top-down reorganisation of our NHS. It will fail to integrate health and social care, erode local accountability, and give powers to the Health Secretary to hand major contracts to the private sector without scrutiny. Along with my colleagues, I voted against the Bill at second reading.

The Government says the Bill builds on the NHS's own proposals for reform, aiming to make it less bureaucratic, more accountable, and more integrated. Like many in the health sector, I agree with the objective of more integrated health and care services. But I am concerned that this is the wrong Bill at the wrong time.

This is a moment of great pressure on the NHS. Yet there is nothing in the legislation to address the greatest challenges facing the NHS. I believe the Government's focus must instead be on ensuring that services are appropriately staffed and have the resources they need.

There are widespread concerns that private sector involvement in NHS services has created a fragmented and marketised system. The Health and Social Care Act 2012, which I have consistently opposed, introduced competitive tendering, forced privatisation and it prevents proper integration.

Instead of this being a simple Bill to end competition and foster local collaboration, I share your concerns that it may allow further outsourcing by permitting the private sector to sit on local boards. And it does not reinstate the NHS as the default provider of services.

I am pleased that the Opposition is seeking to amend the Bill to remove any possibility that private, profit-motivated firms can have any role in the boards of the new Integrated Care Systems (ICS). During the Committee Stage of the Bill, the Health Minister conceded to these concerns and said the Government will bring forward an amendment to protect the independence of ICS boards by preventing individuals with interests in private healthcare from sitting on them. The Opposition will continue to press Ministers on this concession as the Bill progresses.

I am committed to upholding the NHS's founding principles as a comprehensive, integrated, and public NHS that is there for all of us when we need it. I will continue to resist any plans to allow further privatisation.

**Marie Rimmer CBE, MP**

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