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For immediate release

PARLIAMENT MUST HAVE A SAY ON “CALLOUS” DISABILITY BENEFIT CUTS

Changes to Personal Independence Payments must be fully scrutinised

Local MP Corri Wilson has called on the UK Government to ensure that its plans to cut Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) are debated in Parliament to allow MPs to fully scrutinise the proposals.

The UK Government has announced emergency legislation to change PIPs, which replaced Disability Living Allowance, and overturn two tribunal rulings last year which it claims would have added £3.7bn to the benefits bill by 2023. The support is designed to help people cope with the extra costs of living with ill health or disability, and the cuts could see around 160,000 disabled people stripped of their financial support.

Tory MP and head of the Number 10 Policy Unit George Freeman, said the changes would ensure that benefits went to people who are “really disabled” rather than people “who suffer from anxiety”. His comments have drawn criticism from opposition MPs and disability organisations.

Ms Wilson spoke out in against the cuts in Parliament on Tuesday during an emergency question on the issue, and attended a demonstration outside Parliament organised by disability charity Sense.

Corri Wilson, MP for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock and the SNP’s Disability spokesperson, said:

“These changes will exclude disabled people from vital financial assistance and sends a dangerous message to the public that people suffering from mental health conditions are less worthy of support than those with physical disabilities.

“With condemnation from opposition MPs - as well as some Conservative MPs - and from disabled people and countless disability organisations, I also urge the Work and Pensions Secretary Damian Green to rethink these callous changes. The Tories must explain why those with mental health conditions are not entitled to the same levels of support as others?

“It’s imperative that we get clarification on what this means for the future disabled people who are in need of PIP support and it is vital that MPs are given the opportunity to debate and fully scrutinise these cuts.

“Clearly, this emergency legislation is about the Tory government trying to make savings at any cost and with absolutely no thought for the most important element at stake here: the disabled people whose lives will be affected.”

“We were told that there would be no further cuts to disability support during this parliament but once again this Tory government has shown that austerity - no matter what the impact is on people’s lives - is to be pursued at all costs.

“I have co-sponsored a motion in the House of Commons to formally object to this legislation and I call on all MPs to unite in opposition against these changes by adding their signature too.”

....ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- The full text of the parliamentary motion can be viewed at <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2016-17/985>
- Corri Wilson's exchange with Damian Green during the Urgent Question on the issue can be viewed at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-02-28/debates/1BC73580-FC7B-4DDA-9B66-B47A33894733/PersonalIndependencePayments?highlight=PIP#contribution-7C794730-2F35-4CEB-86CB-384805D0216C>
- Corri Wilson MP has also submitted a request for a Westminster Hall debate on this issue.