

## P-04-457 The Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee

### The Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign *The Wales-wide, cross-party campaign for a charitable hospital chaplaincy.*

Thank you for forwarding the response of Lesley Griffiths AM to the petition by the Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign.

We note that Ms. Griffiths has since been replaced as Minister by Professor Mark Drakeford AM.

Lesley Griffiths has failed to respond in any meaningful way to our petition. She has not addressed our proposal that the chaplaincy service remains in place and is facilitated in exactly the same way as at present, but with a different source of funding. Instead she has chosen to address another issue, that of the value of the service which, because of lack of evidence, we do not challenge.

The claim by Ms. Griffiths that hospital chaplains serve “the majority of patients” is a wishful assertion not supported by evidence. Anecdotal reports from healthcare professionals and patients suggests that it is very rare for patients to take active steps to see a chaplain and that many patients of a non-religious persuasion feel disadvantaged that support by a person appointed on merit rather than religion, is not available to them. Our FOI Act data on employment provided for the Petitions Committee suggests quite the opposite to Ms. Griffiths’ claim. In FY 2011/12 **every** chaplain employed by the NHS Wales was a religious cleric. Since no data has been collated by the NHS, we cannot claim to have evidence that the majority of patients do not use the chaplaincy but nor can Ms. Griffiths support her claim with evidence that hospital chaplains serve “the majority of patients”.

Regarding the **real** issue raised by the petition, namely **the source of funding**, Ms. Griffiths asserts that she believes “the best way” is to fund the service from the Wales NHS budget.

Ms. Griffiths does not say for whom it is best.

Ms. Griffiths does not explain why she believes that it might be best.

That the Petitions Committee should have been asked to accept Ms Griffiths’ unreferenced beliefs without explanation, supporting evidence and without a clear answer to the petition proposal leads us to conclude that this reply is insubstantial and inadequate

We respectfully request that the Petitions Committee rejects this inadequate response and asks the Committee Chair to write to the current Minister, Professor Mark Drakeford AM seeking an adequate reply to the petition proposal.

With respect - the key matter which the Minister might address is our challenge to the Welsh Government that it does not have an **obligation to fund** religious\* care in NHS hospitals.

If the Minister cannot establish such an obligation we feel that he should attempt to demonstrate that the £1.3 million per annum spent on clerics cannot be spent more beneficially on other NHS Wales services.

We repeat our offer to meet the Committee, the Minister or the Minister’s staff to explain our position, answer questions and eliminate any misunderstanding of our *Proposal*.

Alan Rogers for the Campaign.

31<sup>st</sup> March 2013

\* Obfuscation by the use of the term “spiritual” instead of “religious” as found in Ms. Griffith’s response is dealt with in our *Proposal*.