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Baroness Thornton
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NL

Tel: 020 7210 3000

Dear Glenys,

18 NOV 2010

Public Bodies Bill

As you will recall, the Second Reading of the Public Bodies Bill generated a lengthy debate, during which you raised specific points about the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) and the Human Tissue Authority (HTA). As the Minister responsible for the review of Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) in the Department of Health, I am writing to address these.

You recalled the lengthy debates in both Houses of Parliament that informed both the Human Tissue Act and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, and quite rightly reminded me of my support for the Human Tissue Act, especially its emphasis on informed consent and the unambiguous regulation of the uses of human tissue. You asked what had changed since then.

I would like to reassure you that I continue to place importance on the principles enshrined in both Acts. We are very proud of the ground-breaking work that the HFEA has undertaken following the passing of the HFE Act, and of the role the HTA has played in raising standards and public confidence in activities involving human tissue.

However, times do change and so has the way we regulate the delivery of healthcare. With the establishment of the CQC, along with the possibility of the creation of a new regulatory body for medical research, alternative structures are now becoming available to ensure a joined-up system which would streamline compliance and reduce the time and effort, and consequently cost, while continuing to offer the public reassurance.

I am copying my response to Lord Taylor of Holbeach, and will be placing a copy of this response in the House of Lords library.

Yours ever,

Richard

EARL HOWE

c.c Lord Taylor of Holbeach