Pleased to see this Early Day Motion tabled by Kate Hoey MP at Westminster. It is not just individuals who can be bankrupted by libel cases that are too easily taken in Northern Ireland because of our unreformed law but also media outlets who can't afford to fight. Newspapers are just not able to risk defending a big case. The DUP blocked Mike Nesbitt's libel reform Bill in the Assembly a couple of years ago and then the Assembly collapsed, hence no change here yet.

LIBEL LAW (NORTHERN IRELAND)

EDM #2594

Share

**Tabled 8 July 2019**

**Kate Hoey**

2017-19 Session

That this House applauds the success of the Defamation Act 2013 in deterring opportunistic and vexatious libel claims in England and Wales; regrets that the Northern Ireland Assembly's refusal to extend that act to Northern Ireland has had the predicted effect of making the province a forum for libel bullies; expresses its concern on the suppression of free speech in Northern Ireland by aggressive legal targeting of newspapers and users of social media; notes that politicians have become active in pursuing media and individuals for financial redress over expressions of opinion which has led to a climate of fear which is referred to as lawfare; applauds the writer Ruth Dudley Edwards for encouraging transparency by going public on social media about a solicitor's letter she has received on behalf of a senior member of Sinn Fein demanding the removal of two tweets and the payment of compensation and legal fees; and strongly urges the Government to resolve the anomaly in the Northern Ireland libel law by extending the Defamation Act 2013 to the province.