

March 18, 2013

Dear Members of the Connecticut Public Health Committee:

RE: "Senate Bill No. 48 to legalize Physician-Assisted Suicide"

I am a second year medical student living in Meriden, CT and I am writing to urge you to vote "NO" on Connecticut House Bill 6645. Instead, I respectfully request that you uphold measures that will protect life.

Requiring physicians to prescribe medications that would end the patient's life is in direct conflict with the Hippocratic Oath. It explicitly says, "I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan."¹ The oath does not provide exceptions for patients who are in extreme pain or even those with a terminal illness. Instead, the language rightfully extends to everyone, regardless of the circumstances. It is unethical to require or even ask a physician to go against this professional code of conduct.

By abandoning the Hippocratic Oath, patients will no longer be able to trust in the professional standards of their physicians. If physicians ignore this aspect of the oath, how can patients trust that that other aspects will be upheld such as "do no harm or injustice" and "benefit my patients according to my greatest ability".¹ Patients would not be able to trust that the physician's motivation is for the patient's good or if they simply desire to reduce society's financial obligations to care for the terminally ill. Patients must be able to always trust that the physician will provide the highest care and preserve the patient's life regardless of the cost.

This legislation would also burden physicians with the impossible task of determining which patients are candidates for physician-assisted suicide. The real question then becomes the value of human life. Does pain or a disability negate the right to life? Is life only valuable if the individual is able to live a full life expectancy of 80 years? I argue that none of these factors influence the value of life and that there is no conceivable factor that would render life not worth living. In fact, the very question leads to a very dangerous line of reasoning. Nazi Germany started off quite similarly with a belief that the handicapped did not deserve to live since they supposedly could not contribute to society. Once on the slippery slope, it was easy for Hitler to extend the category to the Jews. There is a tremendous risk that third-party payers would give physicians incentives to encourage physician-assisted suicide as opposed to continued supportive care that is much more expensive. This shifts the end-of-life decision from the patient to the physicians and insurance companies. From there it is an easy extension to include others such as the disabled or elderly in this group of people who are not fit to live.

As Dr. David Stevens, CEO of the Christian Medical and Dental Associations, has said, "In essence, what is promoted as the ultimate freedom would actually violate individual liberties in a way never imagined." Therefore, I urge you to vote NO for bill 6645 and to instead support legislation that will promote true health care and protect our freedom and our conscience.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amanda Lucashu OMS-II
Meriden, CT

¹ http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/greek/greek_oath.html