

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman/Madam Chairman.

My name is Duane Lueders. I live in West Simsbury.

I am in favor of house bill 6654 , An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for the terminally ill.

I would like to use my time to address two aspects of the debate:

First, to respond to the arguments put forth by the opposition.

And second to Clarify, as best I can, what I consider to be the essence of the bill.

As for the arguments put forth by the opposition, they may appear numerous but they really fall into two categories:

- 1.) Those arguments based on beliefs and**
- 2.) Those arguments purportedly based on fact.**

The arguments based on belief spring primarily from religious teachings. I have nothing against religion per se and respect any person's right to practice his or her beliefs when it comes to his or her own personal life. That includes religious beliefs. However, those who do not adhere to those same religious beliefs should never be compelled to act in accordance with another person's beliefs against their will. In short, no group should ever be allowed to impose its religious beliefs on others. It has no place in this debate.

As for the arguments purportedly based on fact, no legislator can make an informed decision on this bill without first examining the data from the state of Oregon. Simply stated, the bill before us has already been put to the test in Oregon over the last 14 years and the results are clear: it accomplishes its objective of relieving the suffering of terminally ill citizens without any of the adverse affects that have been claimed by the opposition, such as elder abuse, coercion , or the "slippery slope" that so many fear. It is elementary that any

legislator considering a bill that has, in essence, been in effect for a decade in a half in another state would examine the data from that other state. The data is not ambiguous and it systematically refutes, point by point, argument by argument, everything the opposition has to present under the guise of "facts".

Finally I would like to give you my thoughts on what I consider to be the essence of the bill:

When I ask myself "what is this bill really about" or "what do these people really want" the answer is obvious:

They want to be left alone.

To illustrate the point I'm going to take a moment to put myself in the shoes of a qualified patient who would be eligible for relief under this bill. If I were such a patient I would say this to all of you:

I am mentally competent.

Two qualified doctors have told me that I have six months to live.

I am told I should expect to suffer greatly during that time. I would rather not.

I want to obtain medication that will allow me to end my life, peacefully, when I decide I have had enough.

Given my exceptional circumstances can any of you think of any reason why I shouldn't be allowed to do that?

Given my exceptional circumstances can any of you think of any reason why the government should interfere with my ability to go home, get in bed, take my pills and go to sleep never to wake again?

Given my exceptional circumstances, don't I have the right to be left alone?

Is that too much to ask?

To oppose this bill is to withhold readily available relief from a suffering human being.