

My name is Linda Smith-Criddle. I am a priest to the Episcopal Church with a Doctorate in Theological Studies and a Master's Degree in philosophy with a specialization in ethics. I served for 20 years in a hospital setting and counseled innumerable dying persons. I continue my interest in the field to this day and it is from this background that I wish to highlight several issues that I believe are essential to our fully understanding why legislation could possibly be considered that might provide assistance to ending one's life.

First of all, the legislation that is being considered would limit the assistance to circumstances in which a person is facing an imminent death. And suffering is known to her alone. Life is not only biological but biographical and who knows better than the dying one if life under these circumstances is bearable or not. Slippery slope arguments are not defensible, for their intention is to take away the legitimate decision-making right from an individual patient when she is capable of doing so.

We need to hold in tension honoring life and honoring a person's freedom to choose. Yes, life is a gift to celebrate for the most part, .. But there are circumstances in which a person may find oneself in unremitting pain and essentially slowly losing one's life. How long is suffering required? When will the futility of terminal angst be enough to respond to in an intentional fashion?

Some will say that any intentional act is suicide. But the comforting ability in this proposed legislation for a competent individual to indicate such a choice after lengthy efforts to cure have failed is rather a merciful means of alleviating the no exit conundrum.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I extend to you and those who suffer trapped in inexorable decline a Peace that is beyond all human understanding.

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