



MARCH 20, 2013

Re: HB 6645, "An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill"

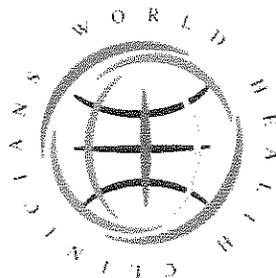
Madame Chairs and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Dr. Gary Blick, and I am Chief Medical Officer of the non-profit World Health Clinicians' CIRCLE CARE Center based in Norwalk. It is an honor to have the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 6645, An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill.

As an HIV/AIDS specialist and general internist who has witnessed the pain and suffering and been intimately involved in the dying and death of literally hundreds of patients over the past 26 years, and also as one who is a strong supporter of Hospice for terminally ill patients with less than 6-12 months to live, I strongly support the bill, HB6645, that seeks to give terminally ill, mentally competent individuals the choice of self-administering healthcare provider-prescribed medications that can be taken to end their prolonged pain and suffering with peace and dignity.

Having been intimately involved with hundreds of terminally ill patients and friends who have suffered and died from HIV/AIDS-related complications, slow tortuous wasting syndromes, or painful stage 4 metastatic cancers, I am here today to testify on their behalf, as well as on behalf of all of my living patients who express the desire to have a very reasonable and compassionate additional choice to consider when faced with terminal illness.

When Superior Court Judge Julia Aurigemma refused in 2010 to hear Blick vs CT which argued that the state's manslaughter statute should not apply to physicians who provide compassionate "aid in dying" via prescription medication, she suggested we make our pleas heard by the state legislature. And so almost three years later, we are all here today to ask you simply to grant terminally ill patients the right to consider one additional choice when planning for their inevitable deaths, the right to choose to end their prolonged and sometimes mentally and physically tortuous pain and suffering in a dignified and humane manner, that is, with FDA-approved prescription medications.

29 years ago, in 1984 upon graduating from the University of Miami Medical School during the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, I took the Oath of Maimonides to "never see in the patient anything but a fellow creature in pain". I acknowledged, "Oh God, Thou has appointed me to watch over the life *and death* of thy creatures. Today (man) can discover his errors of yesterday and tomorrow he can obtain a new light on what he thinks himself sure of today." As I mentioned, having partaken in the deaths of hundreds of friends and patients, I have always been and always will be a major supporter of hospice services and the benefits they bestow upon a terminally patient. But many of the hospice patients whom I certified to have less than 6 months left to die, outlived my declaration by 6-12 months or more. And remembering that I took the oath to "watch over the death" of my patients, I was tormented that dozens of these deaths were horrific, agonizing,



torturous, and, frankly, unnecessary. After an enormous amount of soul-searching, I discovered over time that watching these patients die in this inhumane manner was one of my "errors of yesterday", and, as my spoken words from the Oath of Maimonides, tomorrow I "obtained a new light", a new perspective, a new point-of-view on "what (I) thought myself sure of" at that time. I discovered that for a select few terminally ill patients, their only chance to die with some dignity, while retaining some control of their remaining lives and inevitable deaths, is "aid in dying", and their only opportunity to maintain some dignity in dying remains in your hands today.

I strongly believe that we are a free nation, all of us with a God-given ability and right to make choices for ourselves, including the choice to decide how and when we want to die when there is no hope of survival, when we are faced with interminable pain during our remaining time of this planet, when faced with the possibility of being hooked to a morphine drip that can render you incoherent, psychotic, and completely unaware, while stripping you of your independence, of your ability to make rationale decisions, and of your last remaining chance to leave this world in a dignified and controlled manner. When considering HB6645, I truly hope all of you can rely on your own personal experiences of having watched a loved one die a prolonged, agonizing, and painful death. Even if you have never experienced this kind of horrific and unnecessary death of a loved one, HB6645, An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill, gives your family, your friends, or your loved ones the choice NOT to die in such an inhumane manner.

HB6645 is not for everyone to consider when faced with a terminal illness. On the contrary, it is only for the few who, when faced with the prospect of a protracted, undignified, tormenting death, would rather choose to gather their family and friends around them for one last time and make a controlled, planned, compassionate, and dignified exit. HB6645 merely grants another critically important choice to my and your terminally ill family, friends, and patients, and I pray you find it within yourselves the compassion to allow them the chance, the option to discuss using prescription medications as another legal and viable treatment option. With your approval of this bill, you will help thousands of terminally ill, mentally competent patients avoid unnecessary and inhumane prolonged suffering.

Thank you, Respectfully submitted,

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