

My name is Michael Cavanaugh from Lebanon, CT. I am writing to OPPOSE HB 6645, AN ACT CONCERNING COMPASSIONATE AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS (doctor prescribed/ physician assisted suicide). As a person with disabilities, I do not appreciate the prospects of what this foreshadows.

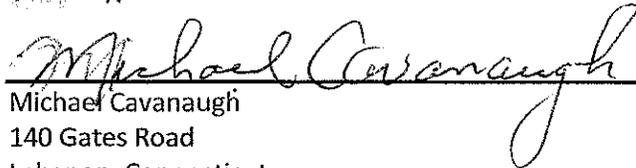
I oppose this bill because:

- 1) The state, its employees, doctors, and caregivers are capable of making mistakes and writing even the most "compassionate Conditions" into the law cannot sufficiently protect Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens.
- 2) Assisted suicide is not only an attack on human life, it is bad public policy that puts vulnerable populations – the sick, the elderly, the young, the poor, people with disabilities – in harm's way.
- 3) Patients are not required to see a psychiatrist, psychologist or counselor before obtaining the lethal drug. This means that people with treatable depression can get a life-ending prescription, rather than effective psychological care.
- 4) The supposed safeguards are laughable. Nothing in HB 6645 will protect patients when they are under financial and emotional pressures which are known to distort patient choice.
- 5) HB 6645 is a recipe/blueprint for abuse of the elderly. Key components allow an heir or abusive caregiver to serve as a witness to help sign the patient up for the lethal drugs and no witnesses are required when the drugs are administered.
- 6) Since there is no requirement for a witness when the drugs are taken, nothing is in place to control the use of the drugs. Who can say that the person prescribed the drugs did not use them to "do away" with someone else out of hatred, greed, mental imbalance or depravity. There are no provisions to prevent doctor shopping and drug storing for sinister purposes.
- 7) HB 6645 fails to give Connecticut any resources or authority to investigate violations or provide oversight.
- 8) Eligibility is based on a six month life expectancy. However, individuals outlive their prognosis by months and often years. Like the commercial says: "Peggy, I don't see any expiration date stamped on the bottom of your foot." HB 6645 will lead people to give up hope and seek treatment.
- 9) Advocates of "Aid in Dying" quote a statistic that only 1/2 of the prescriptions are redeemed. That shows that the law is statistically not necessary.
- 10) The law leaves it open to elder abuse and empowers the health care system in ways that put the vulnerable at risk. (In Oregon, where physician assisted suicide is legal, patients desiring treatment under the state health care plan have been offered assisted suicide instead).

If HB 6645 is passed, Connecticut would be the first state to legalize doctor prescribed suicide in the legislature. Do we really want that distinction and to have our wonderful state known as "Connecticut, the Suicide State"? I hope not.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,


Michael Cavanaugh
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