

Testimony in support of HB 6645, An Act Concerning Compassionate aid in dying for terminally ill patients. By Karen Laski 279 Fern St. Manchester, CT 06040

Please excuse that this testimony may be disjointed. When I wrote down my thoughts, I was wrought with memories and had a difficult time crafting many years into minutes.

I think of this bill as an opportunity to reverse a mandate that demands that the terminally ill accept dying according to the State's statutes. Both my parents were sick for many years. When they were approaching death, I felt as though I had abandoned them, that the whole world had abandoned them. They had no choice but to endure more pain every day. And it wasn't just pain; it was a constant struggle, to be still, to sleep. My father was nauseous and barely able to move, a feeling he always hated and dreaded. Both of my parents feared not being able to breath. That struggle and the accompanying sounds were terrifying for them. This bill was created to enhance the peaceful transition into passing away, the timing to be determined by the person involved. I want to determine how I pass. Fearing the details of an uncontrollable death takes time away from me now during the living years. This is the time I appreciate life, not when I'm struggling with pain and the terror of more pain and perhaps gasping for air. There was no meaning for my parents in this condition. They endured a living hell.

I support hospice. They do as much as they can to relieve pain and give comfort to the dying. For 15 years I cared for my parents and was grateful for hospice when the time came. I had hoped that hospice could protect my parents and ease them into a comfortable death, like going to sleep. That didn't happen despite the wonderful care, the medications, the oxygen. What both my parents feared, what I feared, happened. They both had terminal conditions, no quality of life, but their hearts continued to beat. They saw no merit to this. Their bodies were ravaged and destroyed. Every moment was unbearable. My mother weighed 55 pounds and every part of her body hurt. It hurt to pee, it hurt to breathe. My father's respiratory system started shutting down. He struggled. I needed to change the way the world looked at this struggle and I couldn't. There was no peaceful goodbye, there was just raw suffering.

Looking back at my parent's living years, I remember them both telling me that when there was no hope for them, to let them go. They didn't want to suffer. We weren't aware of how difficult that would be. How long a person can suffer in agony. They both had signed advanced directives before either had become ill. But those directives were only instruction for others. My parents would still not be allowed to decide how much they could take, when passing would be unbearable for them.

Let's do this, let's give people who are pleading for mercy the option of a peaceful passing. Allow them to decide what is right for them. So that they need not fear the abyss of endless suffering and the panic of unceasing pain and struggle. Give them the comfort of knowing that in the face of death, they have the support they need to leave on their own terms.