

SECOND THOUGHTS CONNECTICUT PRESS RELEASE

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SECOND THOUGHTS CONNECTICUT TO HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE IN OPPOSITION TO ASSISTED SUICIDE BILL

Second Thoughts Connecticut, an activist group of people with disabilities and advocates, will hold a press conference in room 2D of the Legislative Office Building on Wednesday, March 20 at 9:30 a.m. to oppose the assisted suicide bill, H.B. 6645.

Second Thoughts spokesperson Cathy Ludlum will be joined by Rep. Peggy Sayers (D-Windsor) Sen. Joe Markley (R-Southington) and other legislators from both parties. The press conference will also include national experts and allies from a wide ideological range, including both gay rights activists and the Family Institute of Connecticut Action. Following the press conference these speakers will offer public hearing testimony laying out the case for why assisted suicide is bad public policy that puts vulnerable people at risk.

Second Thoughts spokesperson Cathy Ludlum stated, "Assisted suicide would be a disaster for the state of Connecticut, particularly for people with disabilities and elderly people who are at risk of being abused. We should do all we can to care for those who need our love and support, rather than hasten their deaths.

"Connecticut's assisted suicide bill, HB 6645, goes far beyond the laws in the two states where assisted suicide is legal. It eliminates the waiting periods that exist in Oregon and Washington. It does not have a mandatory second opinion requirement. It does not include any reporting requirements to the State Department of Public Health. With its push for HB 6645, pro-suicide activists have shown their true radical agenda. Second Thoughts will join with a wide variety of people from across the ideological spectrum to oppose this bill."

Second Thoughts Connecticut consists of Connecticut residents with disabilities, seniors, and advocates who oppose legislation, including HB 6645, that would legalize assisted suicide. Assisted suicide legislation is dangerous and discriminatory, especially for elders and people with disabilities. You can learn more about Second Thoughts Connecticut at our Facebook page, [Facebook.com/SecondThoughtsConnecticut](https://www.facebook.com/SecondThoughtsConnecticut).

Second Thoughts Connecticut

Advocates against the legalization of assisted suicide

HB 6645: FAR TOO DANGEROUS

Deadly Mix: Assisted suicide is a deadly mix with a cost-cutting healthcare system.

- Assisted suicide is usually much cheaper than treating people's medical conditions.
- Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) have an incentive to save money by denying treatment, even when it hastens patients' deaths. This danger would be far greater if assisted suicide were legal.
- It is no coincidence that the author of Oregon's assisted suicide law, Barbara Coombs Lee, was an HMO executive when she drafted the measure.

Self-determination: Assisted suicide is unnecessary because current law gives every person the right to refuse lifesaving treatment, and to have adequate pain relief, including palliative sedation. Assisted suicide decreases self-determination by giving doctors, family and insurers the power to decide whether you will live or die.

Abuse: The proposed law is a recipe for elder abuse.

- **3800 cases of elder abuse were reported in Connecticut in 2009.** People with disabilities are more than twice as likely as non-disabled people to be abused.
- People who are abused are unlikely to admit they are being pressured by family members to apply for assisted suicide when they meet with a doctor to request the drugs.
- An heir can help sign someone up and certify their eligibility, be a witness, and pick up the prescription. The other witness can be a close friend of that heir. Once the drug is in the home, no one knows who takes it, or how it is administered. If the person struggled, who would know?
- Abuse diminishes the quality of life, and increases pain, isolation and feelings of hopelessness.

Safeguards: A total lack of safeguards and oversight in the proposed law puts people at risk of misdiagnosis, deprivation of treatment, and economic pressure to choose suicide, while protecting doctors from liability.

- HB 6455 only requires the opinion of one doctor, unless that doctor believes a second opinion is necessary. Moreover, the proposed law does not require any waiting period between the request for a lethal prescription and the dispensing of the medication. If a doctor refuses to write the lethal prescription, the patient or family can easily find another doctor ("doctor shopping").

- The terminal diagnosis may be incorrect or premature. Also, the definition of "terminal illness" in the proposed law does not consider the effect of treatment in prognosis. For example, a person with a treatable condition such as diabetes could be eligible for doctor-prescribed suicide even though they could live a virtually normal life by taking insulin.
- Nothing in the law can offer protection when family pressures, whether financial or emotional, distort patient choice.
- The law does not include enforcement provisions, investigation authority, oversight, or data verification. The only foolproof safeguard is for the prescribing doctors. The law fails to hold doctors to any standard whatsoever, not even to the very porous "safeguards" that have been proposed elsewhere.

Discrimination: HB 6455 singles out some people (such as old, ill, and disabled people) for discrimination. When young, healthy, non-disabled people express a desire to die, they are given social services and frequently detained and subjected to forced psychiatric drugging or even electroshock to prevent their suicides. Yet when people with disabilities or terminal illness express such a desire, they are steered toward assisted suicide. Both suicide assistance and forced psychiatric intervention are out of step with Connecticut's progressive tradition as a leader against discrimination.

AT FIRST GLANCE, PASSAGE OF HB 6455 MAY LOOK LIKE A GOOD IDEA, BUT ON **SECOND THOUGHT, IT'S BAD FOR PEOPLE AND BAD PUBLIC POLICY.**

VOTE **NO** ON HB 6455

Disability Rights groups opposed to Assisted Suicide.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ADAPT) ▪ Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) ▪ Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) ▪ Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities ▪ Council of Canadians with Disabilities ▪ Disability Policy Consortium ▪ Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Justice For All (JFA) ▪ National Council on Disability (NCD) ▪ National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) ▪ National Spinal Cord Injury Association ▪ Not Dead Yet (NDY) ▪ Not Dead Yet UK campaign ▪ TASH ▪ The World Association of Persons with Disabilities (WAPD) ▪ The World Institute on Disability (WID)
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For more information, visit **Second Thoughts Connecticut** on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SecondThoughtsConnecticut>
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