



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR
HEALTHCARE AT HOME

TESTIMONY

Delivered by Tracy Wodatch, Vice President of Clinical and Regulatory Services
The Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home

Before the Public Health Committee

March 20, 2013

Raised Bill No. 6645

An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Tracy Wodatch, Vice President of Clinical and Regulatory Services at the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. I am also an RN with 30 years experience in home health, hospice, long term and acute care.

The Association represents 60 licensed and certified home health and hospice agencies that perform 5-million home health and community-based visits in our inner cities and rural Connecticut towns each year.

The CT Association for Healthcare at Home is the united voice for Connecticut's hospice and palliative care providers. Our membership includes uniquely and highly qualified individuals and organizations with perspectives and expertise drawn from direct care experiences with those facing terminal illness.

**The CT Association for Healthcare at Home opposes Bill No. 6645
An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients**

On behalf of the Association and its members, I testified before your committee last week in support of two bills (HB 6521 AAC a MOLST pilot and SB 991 AAC a Palliative Care Advisory Council), both emphasize the importance of best practice for hospice and palliative care services and consumer education and conversations with the primary care provider regarding available services, goals of care, and quality end-of-life care. PAS is not an option that promotes quality end-of-life care.

Connecticut currently ranks last or 51st in the country in hospice length of stay which translates into "last minute hospice or end-of-life care." The provider continuum is not doing enough to promote hospice and palliative care services resulting in poorly informed consumers regarding their end-of-life options. Perhaps this is why some feel a bill on PAS is needed.

Instead of considering legalizing PAS, let's instead focus our efforts on the essence of hospice care which is to allow patients to make the most of their remaining time.



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR
HEALTHCARE AT HOME

Hospice values people's lives until their natural end, making their death a true "death with dignity." Our Association and its members affirm and promote the importance and ongoing need for education and access to hospice and palliative care for terminally ill people and their families.

Here are some of the things Hospice and Palliative Care providers can do:

- Offer expert, compassionate relief of pain and suffering at end of life enhancing the quality of both living and dying.
- Strive to help patients and families deal with important physical, psychological, social, spiritual and practical issues, and their associated expectations, needs, hopes and fears.
- Promote opportunities for meaningful experiences, and personal and spiritual growth so patients may live life to the fullest and die with dignity.
- Assist patients and families cope with loss and grief through best-practice bereavement support and
- Support the patient's right to participate in all decisions regarding their care, treatment and services based on knowledge and access to all forms of treatment that have been shown to enhance quality of life and reduce suffering.

The CT Association for Healthcare at Home is committed to the hospice philosophy cherishing life until its natural end while reinforcing dignity, quality and comfort. Our Association and its 30 hospice providers afford the highest regard for person-centered choice and self-determination. We look forward to participating in and guiding the ongoing dialogue and debate to continuously improve upon and promote comfort and dignity in life closure. However, we **do NOT support the legalization of physician-assisted suicide.**

Thank you and if you have any further questions, please contact me directly at Wodatch@cthealthcareathome.org or 203-774-4940.