

Madam Chairs, and Honorable Senators and Representatives

My name is Jim Young, and I live in Groton, CT.

I am here to speak in favor of house Bill 6645, An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in dying for the Terminally Ill.

I have practiced law since 1981, since 1987 in Southeastern Connecticut, and prior to that in Portland, Oregon. I often meet with clients who are signing advance health directives and Wills.

This Bill is another step in a long evolving trend in the law that recognizes our rights as citizens to control our own bodies, a fundamental human right.

The legislation allows a select group of "qualified patients" to accelerate the time of their deaths.....you are no doubt familiar with the narrow class of persons who may be qualified patients, but in part this generally means two doctors have determined you have an incurable and irreversible medical condition that will result in your death in six months, that you have asked for aid in dying, and are not depressed

I suspect I am not the only person here, who has watched a loved one suffer through the final months of an excruciating terminal illness, enduring the loss of mental faculties, physical abilities, memory, the ability to enjoy life, and what some would say are the very qualities that make us human and make life worth living.....or who has known a loved one who could be a "qualified patient" take their own lives with such firearm or hoard of pills as they have secreted away....because they are feared spending their final days on this earth trying to manage their pain and watching themselves turn into a mere shadow of their true selves, becoming wholly dependent on others.....

As for the parade of abuses that some claim will arise from this Bill, after reviewing the results under the Oregon law in force now for 15 years, one must say there is no reasonable basis to claim this proposed bill will lead to abuses..... ..and it is clear the law in Oregon has not led to abuses.....there is no reason to think this Bill will lead to abuses in CT

Who avails themselves of this right? The State Mandated Fourteenth Annual Report on Oregon Death with Dignity, 2012 informs us that of those who obtained the medication, 90% were in hospice care. 81% had cancer. 95% died at home. There is nothing in these numbers to suggest people are turning the law to evil ends. What compelling public policy is there, to refuse to allow a person in hospice the choice of accelerating the time of their deaths, if they believe that is the correct choice for them?

So I think the question is should we have this law, which will give qualified patients a certain amount of control over how they die, or will we continue to be required to endure such pain and suffering as may be our bad luck to bear, and must we impose upon our families and loved ones an equal or greater measure of pain and suffering by virtue of them standing witness to our suffering.....sometimes as our families are impoverished

Why cannot we here in Connecticut, have the same rights and choices as those in Oregon and Washington, where if we are "qualified patients" we can control how much of that final death march we endure.....and at such a time as we feel we can go no further, to say "enough", and leave the field of life with our pride and dignity, through a thoughtful process as set out in this bill, that shields us from decisions made out of depression.....

Might not you, or some loved one of yours, want to be able to make that choice at some day in the future? What good reason is there for refusing a citizen of our State the right with all the protections in this Bill, to make that choice if they feel it is the right one for them?

As to the claims that passing the law will lead to abuse.....I suggest there is another question to ask,a more valid question.

What about the pain and suffering of the many CT citizens that will doubtlessly be imposed upon them IF THIS LAW IS NOT PASSED?.....

You have a tremendous opportunity to do something of lasting and material benefit for our citizens, that shows courage, true caring, humanity, and compassion. I ask you to vote for this Bill.