



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
*COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES*



**Public Health Committee**

**March 17, 2014**

**Testimony AGAINST H.B. 5326  
AN ACT CONCERNING COMPASSIONATE AID IN DYING FOR  
TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS**

Good morning. My name is Bill Knight and I am Chairperson of the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities. The Council is a Governor-appointed body which includes people with developmental disabilities, family members and professionals working toward full inclusion of children and adults with all disabilities in the community.

I have come here today to testify in opposition to raised House Bill 5326. This proposed legislation is an act concerning "Compassionate aid in dying for people who are terminally ill" which is also known as physician assisted suicide. The council voted unanimously to oppose HB 5236 for many reasons.

This bill is unnecessary because current law gives every person the right to refuse lifesaving treatment, and to have adequate pain relief, including palliative sedation to die in your sleep. Assisted suicide decreases self-determination by giving doctors and insurers the power not just to cure, but to kill. Pressure to cut costs, delays in treatment and limited coverage for home care can lead patients, families and doctors to choose the cheapest alternative, even if that is death by assisted suicide.

In the state of Oregon, which is the legislation that this raised bill is modeled after, it has been reported that most people who are considering ending their life do so for reasons other than enduring intolerable pain. The reason that is sighted most is that they don't want to be a burden to their loved ones.

A lack of sufficient safeguards and oversight in the proposed law puts people at risk of deprivation of treatment and economic pressure to choose suicide, while protecting doctors and others from liability. This bill does not include any reporting requirements to the State Department of Public Health. Though there are people on the other side of this issue who may argue that there are safeguards in place in the proposed legislation, no amount of safeguards will be enough. This lack of safeguards and oversight in the proposed law puts people, like many on the Council who have disabilities, at risk. There is nothing in this bill that can offer protection when family pressures, whether financial or emotional, distort patient choice. We are deeply concerned with the risks posed by this bill.

Physician assisted suicide will pay for the medication to allow for suicide while payment for community supports and needed treatment remain underfunded. This law would disproportionately affect some individuals (such as the elderly or people with disabilities) for assisted suicide instead of providing resources for suicide prevention, community supports and access to adequate and appropriate care. The bill is not in step with efforts to support people in their communities rather than allowing them to die.

It is for these reasons that the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities is opposed to Raised House Bill 5326. We urge you to vote no when it comes up for a vote in the Public Health Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify on this important legislation today.

**Bill Knight, Chair**

**CT Council on developmental Disabilities**