

## Testimony on HB 5326: An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients

Members of the Public Health Committee, I am opposed to this Bill and the legalization of physician assisted suicide.

When a disease is no longer curable, I believe the person and their family deserve to choose quality end of life care supported by a hospice program. The end of one's life is not merely a medical event but an end that we all share and an end that can be just as dignified, peaceful and fulfilling as the beginning of one's life. Allowing natural death does not need to be painful or fraught with multiple untoward symptoms. Hospice care is available to every individual and their family and actively treats pain and other difficult symptoms so comfort, awareness, choices and fulfilling life goals may be maintained.

The counter argument that states end of life is/must be burdened with much pain, terrible symptoms and extreme anxiety for all involved is NOT the experience I have seen in my over 34 years as a hospice nurse and subsequently as President/CEO of Center for Hospice Care Southeast Connecticut for these past 27 years. In caring for our over 10,000 patients and their families we have faced challenges of severe symptoms but have always been able to alleviate them, provide peace and support and education as a community member faces the end of their loved one's life.

Compare this choice and the experiences of over 1,700,000 people each year in the US to what is presented in this Bill. Compare the cards, letters, notes and deep expressions of gratefulness to our organization and other hospices saying: thank you, I couldn't have gone through this without you, you helped me keep her at home, it was a beautiful, peaceful death... to what is presented in this Bill.

Instead of focusing effort on the Bill, instead of placing valuable resources here in the end of life discussion, perhaps we are better served to focus on educating all consumers regarding their right to excellent end of life care through hospice care, through frank discussions with their trusted physician in the "what ifs" regarding the life limiting diseases they face. Perhaps stressing that everyone is entitled to information and choices and education about their own health care situation. Perhaps ensuring that each of us deserves to have clear communication with healthcare providers so understanding of our unique circumstance may be achieved.

There is no need for one to take one's own life when expert end of life care through hospice programs serving all towns of Connecticut are available. There is a need to ensure that all of our communities know of THEIR choices for hospice care. Hospice providers ensure that life is seen as a glass half full, not a glass half empty. Promote THAT choice, oppose this Bill.

Thank you for your time,

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President/CEO