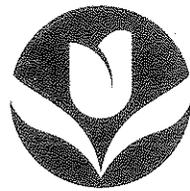


MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL



Hospice &
Palliative Care

TESTIMONY

Delivered by Dr. Bill Zeidler, Medical Director
Hospice & Palliative Care, Middlesex Hospital Homecare

Before the Public Health Committee

March 2014

Raised Bill No. 6645

An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and esteemed members of the Public Health Committee, I am Dr. Bill Zeidler. As a physician who has been a Hospice and Palliative Care Medical Director since 1985, I have cared for thousands of dying patients and their families. You should also probably know that I am Board Certified in Family Medicine, Geriatrics and Hospice & Palliative Medicine - and also quite honored to be a Founding Member of the American Academy of Hospice & Palliative Medicine.

I am opposed to this bill and the legalization of Physician Assisted Suicide.

As all of you know so well, dying is never easy, and can be quite difficult for both patients and their families. However, with the resources we have available in Hospice & Palliative Care, we can lessen our patients pain and suffering, often bringing a sense of serenity and peace to our dying patients and their loved ones. We do this as a team, utilizing the expertise of nurses, home health aides, social workers, physical therapists, pharmacists, speech therapists, specialists in integrative medicine, clergy and volunteers, as well as physicians. This is truly compassionate aid for our terminally ill patients, and far different from the nature and particulars of your bill.

What you describe in your bill is succinctly Physician Assisted Suicide - where a physician such as myself, would write a prescription for a large amount of medication, instruct the patient and his or her loved ones - for each human being is not an island unto oneself, but part of a larger family and community - on the intended effects of the drugs, the possible side effects and other toxicities, the effects this act might have on his or her loved ones who live on after the suicide, and the possible unintended outcomes - that the patient may not die, but might continue to exist in a far worsened physical state, where he or she might not be able to intentionally end his or her life - the definition of suicide.

Where would I obtain the education and training to be part of this Act? This was not part of my medical school and residency education - over the last 30 years, I have attended many courses, seminars and assemblies in Hospice & Palliative Care - this topic - PAS - has never been taught. It is not in the curriculum I use when teaching the many medical students and Family Medicine residents who rotate through our Hospice & Care Program each year. What they see and learn in our Program, is far more compassionate and caring than PAS.

To summarize, we - as families, healthcare professionals, Hospice and Palliative Care Programs, as communities, as a State, as a society - can do far better than Physician Assisted Suicide in delivering compassionate care to our dying patients and their loved ones!

Thank you - if you have further questions, please contact me directly at william.zeidler@midhosp.org or 860-358-4758.

Thanks for your caring and time,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Zeidler". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bill Zeidler, M.D.

Medical Director

Middlesex Hospital Hospice & Palliative Care