

Dear Committee Members.

I support aid in dying.

I understand there is an outcry against this Bill from the Catholic Church (I attended Catholic elementary and high school). There are many churches and many faiths. Each have their own creeds and beliefs. No Catholic is obligated to participate in aid in dying. I do not think the church should seek to impose its views on this topic upon society at large. Church leaders are often quite vocal in trying to impose upon society at large their views on matters that most Connecticut citizens see as ones of personal privacy and self-determination, perhaps most obviously in the area of women's reproductive rights. I often think that the church should spend more time "healing itself", and caring for the poor, than in attempting to impact public debates of this nature, about very personal matters.

As to those who call themselves advocates for the disabled, and raise the specter of disabled persons being euthanized under the cloak of this bill, I ask of them that they not only raise frightening stories of what might happen under this legislation, but that they come forward with documented cases of actual abuse that has occurred in the states that for many years have had legislation similar to that proposed now in Connecticut. Given the outcry heard from some quarters one would think there must be ample evidence of abuses inflicted upon the disabled by evil doers. I sometimes think some of these who claim to speak as advocates for the disabled are not familiar with the terms of the proposed legislation, or are willfully ignorant of it, or that they like to see themselves at the head of a crowd.

The proposed legislation is chock full of safeguards, checks and balances. One might think even to the point of materially diminishing the promise of the legislation. I do not think one can reasonably say that there are not sufficient safeguards built into the law.

I have practiced law for over 30 years and often work with seniors and elders and their families. Prior to attending law school I worked as an orderly in a nursing home on a total care floor. I do not mean to say that I think I have any special wisdom about these things. But I do think that the proposed legislation could be a comfort to many, even those who (and I understand this is a fair percentage of those who obtain the medication in the states where it is allowed) do not choose to take it.

I have lived with and cared for a person who suffered and died from cancer and who benefited from a hospice program. I think hospice is a wonderful program but that it should not be the only option available to persons who are competent, not depressed, and suffer from a terminal illness. Notwithstanding everything one hears it cannot truly be said that hospice can always make a person pain free. I have seen to the contrary. And some of the medications which are used to alleviate the pain come with very heavy side effects, including sometimes death.

I have known persons who have taken their own lives with guns, and otherwise, because they suffered from a terminal illness and could not bear the thought of suffering through painful,

debilitating, final months, possibly in a nursing home, slowly losing all control over their bodies, and slipping into a ghost or a shadow of their true selves. One sometimes hears the term “death with dignity” and I think it is something that speaks to many persons. Without legislation of this sort, there are more than a few persons who will find death with dignity as they can, with guns, or pills, or in such manner as they can. Why should a person who can qualify for the medication under the proposed law to accelerate the end of their lives be denied it? What value is there to the society in forcing a person who might desire to accelerate the end of their lives and who qualifies for the medication, to suffer through some final months possibly filled with pain, waiting for death to come in a manner that is acceptable to others? What harm is there to society in allowing a patient who qualifies for the medication to discuss these matters with their Physician, and make such decision as the patient feels is best for them?

I ask the committee to weigh whether more harm is likely to come from adopting this legislation, or not. My sense of things is that there is much more harm that will occur from not adopting this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Young  
27 Clipper Court  
Mystic, CT 06355  
860-444-2101