

March 17, 2014

RE: Public Hearing on HB 5326

Dear Public Health Committee Members:

I am writing in connection with HB 5326 and urge you most passionately to oppose it.

The proposed legislation is in direct violation of the role and right of doctor to protect his/her patients, violates the rights of the patient to be given palliative care and to die with true dignity, and violates society as a whole if we sanction the killing of the weak and vulnerable in our society.

The role of doctor to heal and to provide palliative is undermined by this legislation. As the Hippocratic Oath promises, the physician "...will prescribe regimens for the good of [his/her] patients according to [his/her] ability and [his/her] judgment and never do harm to anyone...[nor] will give no deadly medicine to any one if asked, nor suggest any such counsel." The AMA's 1993 statement elaborates on this further: "'Physician-assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer, would be difficult or impossible to control, and would pose serious societal risks."

The patient's right to palliative care in serious or life-threatening illnesses will be compromised by this legislation. It is not a stretch of imagination to see how patients could be encouraged to take their own lives rather than be seen as "burdens" to those around them. The terminally-ill, handicapped and the dying, no matter what the prognosis, should be valued as fellow human beings and should be given access to the best palliative care - not considered as disposable burdens on society.

There are further problematic issues with this legislation: the likelihood of abuse by those of ill-intent, the rise of assisted-suicides among the young and vulnerable, the reduced incentive to improve palliative care and/or research for cures of serious illness.

Lastly, I find the euphemistic name of legislation alarming: "Compassionate Aid for Dying". This title would be appropriate for palliative care NOT the legalization of suicide. The naming of this legislation calls into question the motives of those who wrote and support it.

Please protect Connecticut's citizens and their practicing physicians and oppose this legislation.

Sincerely,

Nancy Grimm
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