

TESTIMONY OPPOSING HB 5326  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE  
MARCH 17, 2014

Sen Gerratana, Rep Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee, I am Pam Lucashu of Durham, CT, and I ask you to vote against HB 5326, "An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients".

It is regrettable that we are revisiting an act that advances poor public policy. Tweaks to this assisted suicide bill do not make the proposal more palatable.

I attended the funeral this week of a dear aunt who had fallen and broken 2 vertebrae in her back. She was in severe pain. The doctors made adjustments to the neck brace that she wore to alleviate that pain, but thankfully no one suggested that she be administered a lethal dose of medication to end her life. The week she remained alive after her fall allowed her granddaughter and great-grandchildren to fly out to see her and bring a smile to her face. It allowed her and her daughters time together to say goodbye.

This is the kind of death I observed as a hospice volunteer as well. Hospice and palliative care provide the dignity and pain management needed for the dying. Medication is available not only for pain, but also for anxiety and depression. In addition to the closure I observed for patients and their families, I also worked with patients who left hospice care because they had outlived their original diagnosis.

Proponents argue that assisted suicide is a matter of personal choice—an opportunity to control the means and timing of one's death, as though there is no repercussion to the community in that choice. In fact the opposite is true. The repercussions are reflected in the consequences observable in those states- and countries- where assisted suicide exists:

~denial of Medicaid benefits for treatment for Barbara Wagner and Randy Stroup in Oregon while telling them their insurance would pay for assisted suicide<sup>1</sup>

~euthanasia now permitted in Belgium for children<sup>2</sup>

~increase in overall suicide rate in those areas where assisted suicide is legal<sup>3</sup>

Personal choice is an illusion in assisted suicide. We can see the clear progression from *choice* for those who wish to end their own life, to *control* by others who wish to end the lives of the disabled, the elderly, the young, and anyone else whom some "professional" deems to have inferior value. For the sake of our community and ourselves, we must value every life.

"Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind" (Donne).

Please vote No on HB 5326.

Respectfully,  
Pam Lucashu

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/4736927/Right-to-die-can-become-a-duty-to-die.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/breaking-belgium-parliament-passes-law-allowing-children-to-be-euthanized>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/news/2010news/2010-0909a.pdf>