

**Statement for the Public Hearing Supporting Proposed Bill HB 5326**  
**An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill – 3/17/14**

To the Members of the Public Health Committee:

My mother lived to be 94. She had a wonderful life, but the way she died was tragic. After 13 hospitalizations in less than a year, she went into Hospice care. They could do little to help her except administer medication to lessen the extreme pain she felt.

However, it was not the pain that disturbed her the most, it was the total helplessness she felt. She could not walk or dress herself. She was incontinent, which caused her terrible embarrassment. She had to be fed soft food or liquids. She had to be turned in bed to prevent bed sores. She couldn't even sit up by herself. The more she required pain medicine, the more she slept and lost her alertness when she was awake. She hardly reacted when she had visits from her beloved grandchildren and great-grandchild.

In one of the last conversations we had, she said, "My wonderful life is gone." And she expressed her desire to pass away.

I was not surprised, sometime later, when I found the results of a study reported by *The New England Journal of Medicine* on terminally ill patients from Oregon's and Washington's "Death with Dignity" programs (1998-2011). The primary reasons the patients gave for wanting to end their lives were: "loss of autonomy" (97.2%) and "loss of dignity" 75%. Though pain was mentioned, the more pressing need to end their suffering was to preserve their autonomy and dignity in their few remaining months.

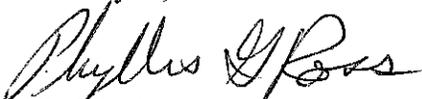
I also learned that 97% of those people who chose compassionate aid in dying were under Hospice care. Clearly Hospice care alone is *not an alternative*.

In Oregon, with 15 years' experience with a law similar to the one proposed here, 40% of the people who receive a prescription for lethal medicine did not ingest it. Doctors and health care professionals have concluded that just knowing patients can decide for themselves when it's time to end their suffering, brings great comfort in their last months.

A Quinnipiac University poll, reported on March 6, 2014, showed that 61% of Connecticut voters support allowing doctors to prescribe drugs to help terminally-ill patients end their own lives—61% among all age, political party and gender groups

The majority of the people of Connecticut believe that a mentally competent terminally-ill person should have the right to choose a peaceful, dignified death. I urge you to vote for the proposed legislation.

Thank you,



Phyllis G. Ross

201 Blood Street, Lyme, CT