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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Written testimony from Anita Vigeant, RN, BA, Supervisor, Home Health Aide/Homemaker Department, Stratford Visiting Nurse Association for the Public Health Committee

March 5, 2014

Raised HB 5326: *An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients*

Good day Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Anita Vigeant. I am an RN and a Supervisor at the Stratford Visiting Nurse Association in Stratford CT. I am also an End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC) Trainer as well as a member of the Hospice and Palliative Care Committee at the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home.

I strongly oppose this bill. In the late 1990's the news was full of reports of the latest assisted suicide by Dr. Jack Kovorkian. The State of Oregon passed a Death With Dignity Law in 1994. Organizations such as the Hemlock Society became well known. In response, then Connecticut Attorney General, now US Senator Richard Blumenthal promoted a program called Physician Assisted Living: The PAL Initiative. The thrust of this initiative was to promote and educate the well and unwell to the benefits of hospice care. I was very proud of my state for taking this positive approach towards this national discussion.

Again, our state has the opportunity to take a stand for compassionate end of life choices, and there are many—a "do not resuscitate" order, stop curative treatment (such as chemotherapy), stop life sustaining treatment (such as hemodialysis), comfort care only, treatment in the home, treatment in an in-patient hospice—all of which all Connecticut adults can (and should) make known via advanced directives.

Both hospice care (care of patient and family in the last six months of a terminal illness) and palliative care (comfort and emotional care for patients with worsening chronic illness) should receive more support from our state so all of our citizens can live their lives in comfort with emotional needs met until natural death occurs.

Thank you and if you have any further questions, please contact me directly at avigeant@stratfordvna.org or 203-375-5871.