

In support of House Bill 5326, Aid In Dying

During 48 years in the practice of internal medicine in the Hartford area I have faced end of life situations very often. Usually, patient and family meet this time of life with grace, understanding and acceptance. But, sometimes the end is a bad time with much suffering – inability to breathe, choking and gagging, or intolerable pain. Any honest caregiver would tell you that, at this time, he has hoped the patient would go to Heaven and end the unhappy scene. Living wills and hospice care are really helpful, but don't answer the basic question of whether a normal, sane person with an incurable, irreversible terminal illness should be able to determine his own fate at this time. I strongly feel he has that right, and encourage all Legislators to approve House Bill 5326 that approves Aid in Dying. Opposition to this Bill seems to focus on three areas of fear and concern which I'll respond to now.

Concern – This is suicide which is not acceptable in our society.

We agree that “pathologic” suicide, associated with depression, drugs or alcoholism, is wrong. But, wanting relief from suffering in terminal illness is totally different and could almost be considered a “therapeutic” ending of life. Consider the “Twin Towers of 9/11 when people willfully jumped from a blazing building to escape the ravages of a fatal fire. They had a right to that choice, just

as people with a terminal biologic process such as cancer, heart disease or emphysema have that right. We should let them exercise it!

Concern – This bill will be harmful to patients and families, or to society with a possible “slippery slope” to more liberal legislation.

There is no reason to fear either of these things. Patient and family will actually be helped with relief of suffering. In the five states that have Aid in Dying laws, there have been no new Bills submitted to broaden their usage. If, indeed, this happened, you as legislators could vote them down. You are in control!

Concern – Aid in Dying goes against our religious codes and beliefs. Not so.

I’m not an expert in religion, but I don’t know of any religion that wants its people to have pain and suffering. And I can’t imagine any God or greater power, under these conditions and at this terminal time, that would not accept any of His people into His House. I used to tell my patients, when times were tough, that God is good. He won’t leave you when the chips are down. He loves you!

And so I ask you to vote for Bill 5326 supporting Aid in Dying. There’s nothing to fear. It carries no harm and just might help some unfortunate person who is suffering from terminal illness.

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