

Cynara Stites 5326

Testimony in support of HB 5326 - An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill

The aid-in-dying bill would free dying patients, their relatives and their physicians from resorting to desperate and illegal measures to end their suffering as Gene and Kyle did in recent years. Their widows are afraid to tell their stories publically, but they assure me that their stories are real.

Gene was dying of prostate cancer that had metastasized throughout his body. The pain medication provided by Hospice nurses didn't relieve his pain. He told his wife that he wanted to die, so he would stop eating and drinking, and he talked privately with his family doctor. A couple of weeks later, he died of a drug overdose. His wife claims she doesn't know how that happened, but she is grateful that her husband got his wish to end his suffering.

When Kyle got the terminal diagnosis resulting from his accidental exposure to toxic industrial chemicals, he told his wife he hoped she would help him die. Months later, he lay dying at home. The morphine provided by the Hospice nurse could no longer dull his pain. His condition significantly worsened over a three day period. Kyle's wife told the Hospice nurse to leave the room. She spoke into her semi-comatose husband's ear, "I'm helping you now, honey," as she administered OxyContin, which, as she knew when she obtained it illegally, was lethal when combined with morphine. Kyle died a few hours later.

If Connecticut had an aid-in-dying law, Gene and Kyle could have, in consultation with their physicians, filled prescriptions for a lethal concoction of medications. They could have spent their final months, weeks and days with the peace of mind that they had the means to end their suffering when it became unbearable. That time could have been spent celebrating and enjoying their lives with their loved ones and preparing for a peaceful death. An aid-in-dying law could have saved these men from unnecessary suffering and their spouses from the emotional trauma of helplessly witnessing their spouses' unnecessary, prolonged agony. And nobody would need to resort to breaking the law.

The state has no compelling interest in denying dying people a choice to end their suffering. I urge you to pass the aid-in-dying bill.

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