

My name is Suzanne Donahue and I reside in Andover, CT.

Suicide rates are increasing every year in our country across all age groups. "In Connecticut, on average, someone dies by suicide every day of the year" according to PreventSuicideCT.org. Think about what this does to the people they leave behind. We have incredible resources in our state, organizations and foundations with dedicated people who are working tirelessly to create awareness, educate and train people in learning how to intervene on behalf of someone contemplating suicide. They are working to save lives. They want to put an end to this madness.

What a crazy idea it is to think we are here today discussing a bill that will bring Physician-Assisted Suicide to our state; state sanctioned, legal suicide. This is bad policy for Connecticut.

There will be no way to control assisted suicide once you make it legal, no fool-proof law in which to prevent abuses to the system, and certainly no guarantee that the competent, terminally ill patient who wishes to die with dignity one day, doesn't become the incompetent person the next who is euthanized because he or she is deemed mentally unfit or permanently disabled or just plain too old. This policy will open the door to further abuses.

What we need are more effective ways of helping terminally ill patients and responding to their multidisciplinary needs. Palliative and hospice care to include family counseling, good communication, respect of patient autonomy, adequate pain management, emotional support and hope. A patient who receives support, emotional as well as physical is receiving compassion and has choice.

I have personally cared for and lost two family members to terminal illness. In both cases, in the face of adversity, they wanted to live. They endured medical treatment in the hope of extending their lives. When the end came, they were surrounded by loving family to care for them. They died peacefully and with dignity. Death is difficult enough for those left behind, suicide leaves devastation.

HB 5326 (An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients) is assisted suicide. Examine your consciences. Reject this bill by a NO vote for a public policy that is bad and one which will put the vulnerable at risk.

Thank you.