

Testimony and Support of H.B. 7015: Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients
Ellen C. Gonzalez
Judiciary Committee
March 18, 2015

Good Afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Ellen C. Gonzalez, and I am testifying today in support of H.B. 7015.

My husband Daniel, was diagnosed on February 8, 2013 with Lou Gehrig's Disease, commonly known as ALS. Our world as we knew it changed that day. We were thrown into a healthcare world that we knew nothing about.

For the first three months, as the disease slowly progressed we took care of Dan by ourselves. Month four, we had to use VNA. This was a hard pill for Dan to swallow, as he had to allow a total stranger to help him in his daily living. He had deteriorated to the point of not being able to walk by himself and needing help with showering, shaving, and at times eating. By month five, we had to have palliative care. A wonderful nurse who came once a week to check vitals, then a different nurse every day for four hours. As the hours of nursing increased, Dan and our family knew the disease was progressing. There were many talks at night, regarding how important it was to Dan that he maintain his dignity throughout this illness and that he didn't want to be a burden to anyone. As the months continued, so did this awful disease.

Palliative care turned into hospice care. As I write these words, I need you to understand what an extremely hard decision this was. The end was close and there was nothing that anyone could do. Hospice was supposed to make him comfortable and peaceful.

The hospice staff was wonderful, they were there for us 24/7, answering my many questions about medications, body pains, shallow breathing, and inability to swallow. The one question that no one could answer for me was, why did Dan have to wait to die? Why did this man who was so active, so energetic, so full of life have to wait until he was totally dependent on me, our daughter and son in law, and hospice nurses for everything?

If this bill is passed, it would enable people like Dan, to truly die with dignity. To leave this world knowing that their voice was heard and that their last wish was carried out on their terms.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

Ellen C. Gonzalez