

Testimony of Win Heimer
Before the
Joint Committee on Judiciary
Connecticut General Assembly
March 18, 2015

In support of Raised House Bill 7015, An Act Concerning Aid In Dying For Terminally Ill Patients

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas and members of the Committee.

My name is Win Heimer and I am a resident of West Hartford.

I am in support of House Bill 7015, An Act Concerning Aid In Dying For Terminally Ill Patients. I would ask, however, that you give consideration to adjusting the time-frame of six months that is noted on line 80 of the existing bill. For those diagnosed with probable Alzheimer's and similar related terminal illnesses, the slide into incompetency is a long one.

I urge you to allow for a longer time frame under these conditions while someone with Alzheimer's or a similar illness can still be judged competent in accordance with Section 1 (4) and Section 1 (6) of Raised House Bill 7015.

I would like to share with you a letter to the Hartford Courant editor that I wrote in response to an opinion piece written by Susan Melzmuf who has a history of Alzheimer's in her family and would want to know that a path to a peaceful exit exists for her should she also contract this terminal disease.

Here is what I wrote at the time in support of the bill in its former iteration, proposed SB668, An Act Providing A Medical Option Of Compassionate Aid In Dying For Terminally Ill Adults:

“What a sad state of affairs that Susan Melzmuf has all but given up hope of a cure for Alzheimer's in her lifetime [Feb. 1, Opinion, "Living In Alzheimer's Shadow"]. She's right, of course, and given the opportunity she would seek a more dignified way to die.

Basic research funding for the disease at the National Institutes of Health continues to be woefully inadequate. Given the current state of Congress and the state of Alzheimer's research, the outlook for prevention, treatment or cure is grim. With baby boomers coming of age, we'll break the bank on Medicaid expenses alone -- not to mention the sheer tragedies of lost human lives.

[After a ten-year battle] my wife died of Alzheimer's on her 70th Fourth of July birthday [in 2012]. She bravely faced the disease and we both handled it as best we could. But I fear for my children's future and understand Susan's distress.

I fully support her in urging passage of SB 668...

For those like Susan or others who would avail themselves given a choice, this should be an available option.”

I stand by those words in support of HB 7015. It's a humane, compassionate piece of legislation that with slight adjustment ought to be signed in to law. It's the right time and the right thing to do.

Thank you for your consideration.