



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
STATE CAPITOL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

**REPRESENTATIVE KELLY JS LUXENBERG**  
12TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
ROOM 4028  
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8585  
E-MAIL: [Kelly.Luxenberg@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Kelly.Luxenberg@cga.ct.gov)

**MEMBER**  
AGING COMMITTEE  
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN  
LABOR COMMITTEE

Good afternoon, Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee. I am State Representative Kelly Luxenberg and I am here today to express my strong support for HB7015.

I wasn't always a supporter of the death with dignity legislation – even as recently as a few years ago – but my personal experience watching someone I love lose much of their functioning ability and making the ultimate choice has changed my mind.

When my father was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's Disease three weeks before my parents' wedding, he had no choice. He had no control over the fact that his central nervous system was going to progressively fail him causing him uncontrollable tremors and stiffness jeopardizing his ability to move in any typical manner.

When he was forced out of work and onto disability at age 44, there was nothing he could do. He did not elect to have the levodopa and cocktail of other medications that he took throughout the day to mitigate his symptoms stop responding.

He certainly couldn't have wished for his nine-year old daughter to need to physically pull him up from sitting in a chair on a regular basis or clean him up after he used the restroom.

My father didn't choose for the surgeon who did the promising pallidotomy to take experimental liberties that cost him the luxury of swallowing and the ability to help me with even the simplest of sixth grade math assignments.

The last fifteen years of my father's life were not his choice. In fact, they were likely the antithesis of the life he would have wanted.

There is a sad irony to his drowning death: his debilitating fear of water.

There was question whether or not he made the choice on that October day because someone saw him slip, not once, but twice, and regain his balance before falling in - not uncommon for someone who's gait was so impaired.

The note he left behind indicated that he was left with no choice but to do what he did that day. The choice he made was unattractive and undignified and could have gone terribly wrong; it very easily could have failed and he could have suffered much worse.

I struggled for years trying to deny what happened to him and the grief and the anger at times were unbearable. I heard the first responders racing to the local reservoir less than a half mile from my middle school. I didn't come to peace with his death until the last few years when I began to think he was in control of those last final moments, that he knew what he was doing, and that he wasn't as cold, alone, and terrified as I had imagined.

I am here before you today because everyone deserves a choice – a dignified choice – at the end of their life. While this legislation wouldn't have applied to my dad at that specific moment in time, the Parkinson's and myriad of other health issues he faced would have deemed him terminal at some point.

My dad could have had a very different end. One where he was surrounded by the people who loved him, one that was open, and peaceful. I, as a survivor, could have had a different experience with fewer years of heartache and anger if I, my mother and brother could have been with him in his final moments and days, rather than have the police at our doorstep telling us he was gone.

My story isn't unique. Just yesterday, I heard from a constituent whose brother-in-law also took matters into his own hands and killed himself with a shotgun. If he had been allowed to choose to die with dignity, it would have saved her sister and her family the horror of finding him in such an awful state. She still suffers to this day, and she cannot erase what the mind has seen.

This is an issue about choice; it's not mandating action. It's about giving power back to people who have lost control over their own bodies. For those of us who have not suffered such tremendous degradation, we should not project our own beliefs onto others.

In my father's case, the Parkinson's stripped my father from a life with dignity - a life which he deserved - wouldn't it have been great if in death his dignity could have been regained?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly JS Luxenberg". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kelly JS Luxenberg