Thank you "Madam Chair, Mr. Chairman" (as appropriate) "and Members of the Judiciary Committee." My name is Matthew Burke, I live in Portland and I am submitting testimony in OPPOSITION to HB 7015.

Please do not allow assisted suicide to take root in CT. It was my greatest honor to take care of my 91-year-old grandmother in her dying years. She suffered from dementia, congestive heart failure, ended her life bedridden, and required 24-hour care. She passed away on August 2nd of this year while sleeping comfortably at home. I would never have wanted her to feel like a burden to me and opt out of living.

My mother, cousin and I made up the care giving team. Every moment I shared with my Grandmother was a gift from God and at the very end as if bestowed a grace, she became incredibly coherent and vibrant for a short period before she died. With the advancements in medicine today, any patient can be made comfortable. There is no reason for a medical professional to have to kill a patient. Rather, the patient can keep them comfortable until they die naturally. Which death sounds more diginified?

Sec.1, line(19) of HB7015 states: "'Terminal illness' means the final stage of an incurable and irreversible medical condition that an attending physician anticipates, within reasonable medical judgment, will produce a patient's death within six months."

A physician's estimated life span is far from infallible. It is wrong often enough and should make us all skeptical as to whether the estimate can really be considered reliable or trustworthy. This bill proposes that somehow an estimated lifespan is a consistent and trustworthy enough variable to justify suicide.

I would argue that when a doctor is wrong even one time about someone's life span, and consequently the patient opts for suicide and ends their life, it is one suicide too many. I cannot believe this culture is in such a state of moral relativism that we need to debate suicide. I would give my life to save others, to make them feel loved, to reinvigorate them with purpose amidst their suffering. Suicide is tragic, when you receive a phone call that a friend tried to commit suicide, you are horrified and say to yourself, I would have given anything to see them overcome the lie of the devil that somehow they would be better off dead.

Suicide, according to Merriam-Webster is, "the act or an instance of taking one's own life voluntarily and intentionally especially by a person of years of discretion and of sound mind."

The physician when presented with a request to die must first, Sec. 6 (1): Make a determination that the patient

- (A) is an adult [sec.1 (1) a person who is 18 years of age or older],
- (B) has a terminal illness[sec.1 (19) "Terminal illness" means the final stage of an incurable and irreversible medical condition that an attending physician anticipates, within reasonable medical judgment, will produce a patient's death within six months.,
- (C) is competent [sec.1 (4) "Competent" means, in the opinion of a patient's attending physician, consulting physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or a court, that a patient has the capacity to understand and acknowledge the nature and consequences of health care decisions, including the benefits and disadvantages of treatment, to make an informed decision and to communicate such decision to a health care provider, including communicating through a person familiar with a patient's manner of communicating;, and
- (D) has voluntarily requested aid in dying [sec.1 (2) "Aid in dying" means the medical practice of a physician prescribing medication to a qualified patient who is terminally ill, which medication a qualified patient may self-administer to bring about his or her death]….

Then 2 requests must be submitted by the patient. Sec. 3 (a) …Each request shall be witnessed by at least two persons in the presence of the patient. Each person serving as a witness shall attest, in writing, that

to the best of his or her knowledge and belief (1) the patient appears to be of sound mind, (2) the patient is acting voluntarily and not being coerced to sign the request…

The above stipulations accurately define suicide, however, sec.12, line (c) states incorrectly that, "A qualified patient's act of requesting aid in dying or self-administering medication dispensed or prescribed for aid in dying shall not constitute suicide for any purpose, including, but not limited to, a criminal prosecution under section 53a-56 of the general statutes."

This bill is promoting suicide. Let us be crystal clear regarding this point. Based on the aforementioned definition of suicide and the quoted wording of bill 7015, the two are one in the same. In an effort to avoid unwanted attention to this issue of such strong moral concern and get the bill passed under the radar, the bill defines suicide in all but name and then expresses that this act will not "constitute suicide." This hypocrisy should be enough of a warning to us all about this bill.

The question then becomes, why are we now considering suicide a topic that is debatable? It is inherently evil in every respect. The goal of medical professionals is to promote and sustain life, not hinder it. Would we all not agree that it is obviously wrong when a mother is negligent in the care of her child? How then has suicide lost its moral clarity? Stay vigilant, less you fall into the trap and become taken in by the cunning wording of this bill that stands in opposition to life.

I am asking you to take a stand against moral relativism, which is an abandonment of the responsibility to discern right and wrong. Remember where you first learned what is right and wrong, and if having faith was your foundation, I ask you to check in with what you profess to believe and uphold it. The founding fathers were not Godless people, freedom of religion is not freedom from religion. The Judeo-Christian faith and principles are at the core of our society. When calling into question such a fundamental truth, as legislators you must respond to your faith and not just an individualistic opinion if you are to better serve your constituents. Religious polls show that over 51% percent of people in CT are religious and the largest denomination being Catholic at over 35%.

It would be difficult to vote for any elected official who openly supports suicide in the upcoming elections. The decisions made on an issue such as this have profound eternal consequences as many lives could be tragically ended as a result of assisted suicide being legal. Let us recall the love that would lead us to heroically lay down our own lives to save one another and not devalue that sacrifice by supporting the killing of one another. Pray that you remember this love as you make your decision about whether to save the lives of those who would consider suicide.

Thank you, love,

-Your neighbor