



## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 7015 – AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS**

My name is Tim Appleton, the Connecticut Campaign Manager for Compassion & Choices, the leading nonprofit organization committed to helping everyone have the best death possible. We offer free consultation, planning resources, referrals and guidance, and across the nation we work to protect and expand options at the end of life.

***I offer testimony in support of HB 7015, An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients.***

To do that, I am going to read into the record the testimony of Sara Myers, who has ALS, and has testified in support of this bill for the past two years.

In 20 years of organizing on many different issues, I have met a lot of people. Sara stands out – not because of her illness, or even her advocacy, though it is tireless, but because she is quite possibly, the most energy-giving, life-loving individual I have ever met.

My name is Sara Myers. I testify in full support of House Bill 7015, "An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients."

I am 60 years old and have owned a home in Kent, Connecticut for over two decades. Four years ago I was diagnosed with ALS, a terminal disease which is paralyzing my entire body, piece by piece, while my emotional and intellectual capacities remain intact. Eventually, this disease will rob me of my ability to breathe. Yes, it is as horrible as it sounds.

A patient with ALS has a life expectancy of 3 to 5 years. There is no medicine to stop or even slow the progression of this disease. Each and every day I become more and more dependent on the assistance of others for my daily existence. If I choose, I can be kept alive artificially, completely reliant on a mechanical device for breathing, and a feeding tube for nutrition.

But, just as important to me as the choices to prolong my life with this horrible disease, is the right to choose how to die with it.

What's more important than giving a dying person the peace of mind that comes with individual choice?

I urge lawmakers in Connecticut to enact legislation that will allow me and my doctor to work together to achieve a peaceful and dignified death, at the time and place of my choosing.

Some will say there are alternatives for me. I could run my wheelchair and myself into the path of a speeding car, a suggestion I actually received last year after I testified here. I could quit eating and drinking until my organs shut down, a death, which would be neither dignified nor compassionate.

I value life enough to know that I don't want to put anybody else in legal jeopardy because I might want to say, "enough is enough." I do not want to die in a narcotic stupor. I want every day to matter. I want to live my life being aware, able to love, and to be loved consciously.

I value the importance of having dignity at the end of my life. Despite their claims, palliative and hospice doctors and nurses cannot address many of the day-to-day real-life "indecorous" issues facing terminally ill patients. Here is a small example: as my paralysis increases and my breathing capacity decreases, I experience increased pain. With more pain comes more narcotics. And while the narcotics are blessings, they do create extreme constipation, resolved only through enemas and even more invasive, unpleasant tactics. This may seem minor to some, but to me it represents only how increasingly trapped I am in my own useless body.

The only way that patients like me will be assured of choice at the end of life is passage by the state of Connecticut of HB 7015.

Thank you.