

Moniz-Carroll, Rhonda

From: Bonell Lombardi <bandrlombardi@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 1:18 PM
To: JudTestimony
Subject: Raised Bil 7015 (An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients)

Testimony in Support of HB 7015, An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients

I am Bonnell M. Lombardi, 20 Old Litchfield Road, Washington, CT 06793.

I submit this testimony in support of HB 7015 on behalf of my wife Rosemarie B. Lombardi and myself.

My wife Rosemarie died 5 years ago on November 5, 2009 from pancreatic cancer, after suffering unbearable pain and nausea and the inability to care for her most basic personal and bodily needs. The New Milford Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice did everything possible to care for her and make her as comfortable as possible. However, the pain and nausea were too powerful and the palliative steps provided only an uneven pain-ridden morphine coma that Rosemarie found horrible.

Since Connecticut did not have a compassionate aid in dying law, Rosemarie had joined Dignitas, a compassionate aid in dying organization in Switzerland.

The most awful moment for me during Rosemarie's ordeal was when Rosemarie realized that she was too weak to travel and said to me in despair and hopelessness that she knew her chance to seek help from Dignitas had passed. Her despair was not because she had definitely decided to end her own life. She loved life more than any other person that I have ever known and may never have opted to end her own life. Her despair came from the knowledge that she no longer had the option of putting an end to her suffering when her pain, nausea, and indignity became too great to bear. The option of compassionate aid in dying had given her, as it has given so many others where compassionate aid in dying is available, the comfort and strength to cling to life and endure the suffering for as long as possible. With this option gone, Rosemarie no longer had anything to sustain her as her suffering worsened and worsened.

I cannot see how anyone can be so cruel as to withhold this option from terminally persons who are suffering horribly on their way to certain death. Rosemarie had enjoyed her remarkable life fully. What possible purpose could be served by refusing her the right to die with dignity when that remarkable life was ending with terrible suffering and no hope of recovery ? She could of course have done what many others have done before, namely shoot herself or cut her wrists when she could no longer go on. But how horrible would this have been for her and for the loved ones left behind ? Is that what opponents of HB 7015 would wish on people in Rosemarie's situation ?

Opponents who believe that it is wrong for a person to take his or her life in any situation are free to apply this belief to themselves but they have no right to act self-righteously and impose that belief on others who do not share that belief.

Opponents who believe that allowing compassionate aid in dying would lead to abusive euthanasia, particularly for the disabled, have no basis for this belief. HB 7015 has stringent safeguards to protect against just that. Most importantly there has never been a reported case of such misuse in any of the States of the United States which already have compassionate aid in dying laws, including Oregon that has had a compassionate aid in dying law the longest.

I would submit that every Connecticut legislator and citizen needs to stop and take the time to imagine what he or she would want if suffering with an unbearably painful terminal illness or if helplessly witnessing a loved one suffering with an unbearably painful terminal illness. The biggest obstacle to action on compassionate aid in dying is one's thinking that this involves something that will never happen to him or her or something that is too far in the future to bother with now. Wrong. Anyone can find himself or herself in this situation at any time. And, many people in Connecticut are experiencing just such situations now and desperately need the help that HB 7015 would provide.

It is time to stop putting off the passage of a compassionate aid in dying law and pass HB 7015. Connecticut deserves and needs the right to the compassionate aid in dying that surveys show is wanted by a large majority of the people of Connecticut.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnell M. Lombardi

20 Old Litchfield Road

Washington, CT 06793