

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF
HB 7015: AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS.
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
MARCH 18, 2015

This statement represents my own personal views.

I support HB 7015: AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS.

I am in favor of this legislation for two reasons: 1) it provides mentally competent, terminally ill patients the right to control how they face death at the final stages of their illness, increasing their autonomy and alleviating their fears about end of life suffering; and 2) the requirements outlined in the bill prevent abuse and ensures that a decision to request end of life medication will be the patient's decision alone.

I have been fortunate in my life that nobody in my family or circle of close friends has suffered needlessly at the end of their lives. However, it would be comforting to know that the "Aid in Dying" option would be available if I were not so fortunate.

As a pharmaceutical industry scientist and being well versed in palliative care options, I can assure you that the current state of medical science for alleviating and ameliorating end of life suffering is woefully inadequate. In addition there are no new pharmaceutical options on the near or even distant horizon that will change that fact.

Additionally, regardless of whether or not you choose to pass this bill into law, people will continue to take the end of their lives into their own hands. Unfortunately, without a controlled option this often, if not always, becomes an act of desperation. The Journal of the American Medical Association recently published their 4-year study on the effect of gun control laws¹. The pertinent piece of information in the article for the matter at hand is that of the 121,084 firearm related fatalities between 2007-2010 inclusive, the vast majority, i.e., 73,702 were suicides. By comparison, "Aid in Dying" deaths reported during this same time period number 320. Perhaps if there were a controlled option like "Aid in Dying" throughout our country, many of the people who chose to use a firearm to end their lives, would have sought out help from their care givers and found counseling that may have lead to a different, non-violent outcome.

With these facts in mind, it is unclear to me what is motivating the opposition. Why aren't they doing anything to prevent overwhelming amount of firearm suicides rather than letting terminal suffering people chose to end their own lives on their own terms. Upon reflection, I can only conclude that it is yet another way that certain members of our society feel they have the right to control others. Unfortunately, it is usually the

¹ <http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1661390>

helpless and desperate that get controlled. Which is why our democratic form of government needs to intervene.

To me, this is simply a matter of choice. If you are against abortion, don't have one. If you are against gay marriage, don't marry someone of the opposite sex. If you are against "Aid in Dying" while you are suffering in agony at the end of your life, don't ask for a prescription that will help you hasten your inevitable end. At the very least, these CHOICES should be available to an open, enlightened, and democratic society.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that there are no arguments against this bill that are supported by the overwhelming facts and evidence. And indeed, the opposition to this bill is a misguided effort.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage the members of the Judiciary Committee to vote in favor of HB 7015.

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