



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



Judiciary Committee
March 18, 2015
Testimony Against Raised Bill 7015 Aid in Dying
Submitted by Shelagh McClure, Chair
CT Council on Developmental Disabilities

My name is Shelagh McClure and I am Chair of the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities. The Council is a Governor-appointed body which includes people with developmental disabilities, family members and professionals working toward full inclusion of children and adults with all disabilities in the community.

The Council opposes Raised Bill 7015, which is also known as physician assisted suicide. The council voted unanimously to oppose this bill for many reasons.

This bill is unnecessary because current law gives every person the right to refuse lifesaving treatment, and to have adequate pain relief, including palliative sedation to die in your sleep. Assisted suicide decreases self-determination by giving doctors and insurers the power not just to cure, but to kill. Pressure to cut costs, delays in treatment and limited coverage for home care can lead patients, families and doctors to choose the cheapest alternative, even if that is death by assisted suicide.

In the state of Oregon, which is the legislation that this raised bill is modeled after, it has been reported that most people who are considering ending their life do so for reasons other than enduring intolerable pain. The reason that is sighted most is that they don't want to be a burden to their loved ones.

The proposed law is a recipe for elder abuse. **More than 1 in 10 Connecticut elders are abused.** People who are abused and apply for assisted suicide are unlikely to tell a doctor if they are being pressured by family members to request the drug. Additionally, a lack of safeguards and oversight in the proposed law puts people at risk of misdiagnosis, deprivation of treatment, and economic pressure to choose suicide, while protecting doctors from liability. The terminal diagnosis may be incorrect or premature. There is no way to accurately predict a person's life expectancy.

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Finally, by definition, legislation for physician-assisted suicide singles out some people (such as old, ill, and people with disabilities) for discrimination. When young, healthy, non-disabled people say they want to die, they are given social services and often detained and subjected to forced psychiatric drugging or even electroshock to prevent their suicides. Yet when people with disabilities or terminal illness express the same desire, they are steered toward assisted suicide. Both suicide assistance and forced psychiatric intervention are out of step with Connecticut's progressive tradition as a leader against discrimination.

It is for these reasons that the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities is opposed to Raised Bill 7015. We urge you to vote no.