

Good afternoon members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is James Principi, I am a resident of Burlington, Connecticut, and a senior at Lewis S. Mills high school. I am here today IN SUPPORT OF HB 7015: An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients. On December 1, 2013, I lost my uncle and godfather, Daniel Gonzalez to ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) after he fought a courageous yet excruciating nine month battle. Never once did he let this disease break his spirit. He was the epitome of a fighter. However, there is only so much that attitude can do for an individual until the gravity of the situation sets in. The struggle that this man endured made me come to the realization that something should be done to help those suffering from terminal illnesses.

A big thing that needs to be taken into consideration with cases such as these is the quality of life of those being affected. Before Danny was diagnosed, among many other activities, he was an avid fisherman, gardener, and cook. He had always lived a very active lifestyle and that was what he was accustomed to. All of this seemed to come to a halt after he was diagnosed. It first started off as a simple limp in his step and decreasing strength in his right hand. However, the disease progressed rapidly and shortly thereafter, he needed the assistance of a walker to get from room to room. Before long, this once strong, able-bodied man was confined to a wheelchair. Simple tasks that we too often take for granted such as eating, breathing, and even talking, became a struggle without assistance. In the last few days that my uncle was with us, these basic functions of everyday life were impossible. As painful as it was to see him go through this, I cannot imagine what it must have been like for him. Seeing yourself slowly breaking down is something that I honestly don't know if I have the courage to face. I use my uncle as an example because it truly shows how terminal illnesses, in this case ALS, can

completely take away any autonomy that a person has. Terminal illnesses are in most cases degenerative, and while people may live a few months past what doctors expect them to, their quality of life will only be further diminished. This bill gives those with terminal illnesses the ability to decide if and when they will administer the prescribed medication. If a person does end up living past when doctors expected them to pass that is wonderful, but the fact that they are going to die a painful death does not change. Only the patients know when their time has come. If this bill becomes a law, the patient does not have to go through with it. However, the knowledge that they have that choice is comforting enough for some.

If it were up to me and I were the one with the terminal illness. I would want to be remembered as the healthy man that I was. I would like to be as good as I possibly could be right up until my last day. I would not want the last memories of me to be ones that would haunt my family. I would want my passing to be peaceful and dignified with those I love around me. Thank you to the Judiciary Committee for allowing my voice to be heard, and to offer both my condolences and support to those who have been, and are still affected by terminal illnesses.