

TESTIMONY

Delivered by Robin Viklund, RN, BSN, CHPN, Director of Nursing
Regional Hospice and Home Care
Before the Judiciary Committee
March 18, 2015
To OPPOSE Raised Bill No. 7015:
An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Robin Viklund and I am Director of Nursing for Regional Hospice and Home Care. I have been a RN for 30 years, the past 10 of those in hospice and palliative care. I serve on the Board of Directors for CT Association for Healthcare at Home and am the Chair-person for the Hospice and Palliative care committee which represents a majority of the licensed hospice agencies in Connecticut.

I am opposed to Bill No. 7015: An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients.

In the this state and around the country we still have far too many medical professionals that view hospice care as a “last resort” and who make inaccurate assumptions that hospice care is for people who are immediately dying.

Hospice Care is available to those who have a life threatening illness and there is no further curative treatment. Good hospice care is available to all within the last few months of life. Hospice philosophy is a holistic form of care. It is not just about the physical comfort of the person but also the psychosocial and spiritual concerns of the person and their entire family. Hospice relieves emotional and spiritual burden and provides patients and their families with a quality of life that is beyond measure. It allows families to spend precious moments with their loved ones for the remainder of their natural lives. Hospice Care focuses on living life to its fullest with quality, comfort and dignity.

Hospice care should be the best option for every terminally ill person living in CT. Physician assisted suicide should not be. Suicide is an option any healthy or terminally ill person can choose. It is not an option that needs a medical team's guidance or initiation. Health care providers should not ever hasten death in any way.

Hospice values people's lives until their natural end, making their death a true "death with dignity." Instead if Assisted Suicide the goal should be to promote the importance and ongoing need for education and access to hospice and palliative care for terminally ill people and their families.

Hospice and Palliative Care Provides:

- Support the patient's right to participate in all decisions regarding their care, treatment and services based on knowledge and access to all forms of treatment that have been shown to enhance quality of life and reduce suffering.
- Expert symptom management of pain and suffering at the end of life
- Help for patients and families to deal with important physical, psychological, social and spiritual issues as well as their associated expectations, needs, hopes and fears
- Good symptom management and emotional support, so that patients and families can have meaningful experiences as well as personal and spiritual growth.
- Bereavement support for patients and families to cope with loss and grief

I oppose Bill No 7015. Improved education about Hospice Care and its availability at the end of life could better serve our community and state. Hospice care at the end of life helps a person live life to its fullest with comfort and dignity.

Thank you and if you have any further questions, please contact me directly at rviklund@regionalhospicect.org or 203/702-7400.