

Moniz-Carroll, Rhonda

From: Stephen Sledesky <ssledesky@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2015 10:54 PM
To: JudTestimony
Subject: SB 7015

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting testimony IN OPPOSITION TO SB 7015, An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients.

I am vehemently opposed to this legislation.

Persons in their final stages of a terminal illness most need the real compassion of their family, friends and society, who choose to stand by them and support and encourage them in their final days/months and perhaps even years, instead of sending them the message through a handful of pills that they're no longer wanted, appreciated or loved by their family nor society.

As a pastoral professional, I know from my experience with terminally ill persons that often they and their families need and treasure these final months/days/hours of life to come to terms with and make peace with death and sometimes even to make peace with one another. Physician Assisted Suicide would rob the dying of this precious time to transition well from this life to the next, and rob their families of opportunities to accept their loved one's death and possibly to make amends or be reconciled with them.

The death of a loved one is already painful for those being left behind. Why make it even more painful by providing the means for that loved one to take his or her own life?

Then there's the problem with medical diagnoses of terminal illness. How often do we know people who have been told by medical professionals that they have only 6 months to live, who have gone on to live 2, 3 even 5 years or more beyond their diagnosis?

There is potential for abuse, especially with those who do not have full control over their healthcare decisions: the elderly, especially those with dementia, or the disabled who may not fully realize what they are doing. Family members with much to gain from an inheritance or life insurance policy could convince even relatively healthy members of their family to take the path of suicide so as not to become a burden on their loved ones through a protracted illness. Many who are seriously ill are very vulnerable and don't want to be a burden. How easy it would be to take advantage of their vulnerability!

It has been said that the moral measure of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable citizens. Encouraging terminally ill persons to take their own life by providing this option through legislation gravely diminishes us as a society. Far from providing "death with dignity" it demeans the dignity of the dying person, in short telling that person that their life is now worthless.

Instead, quality palliative care can provide physical management of pain and true dignity for a dying person in their final days. Let's work to make this choice more available to those facing imminent death. Let's work to make adequate numbers of nurses and other health care professionals, including mental health professionals, accessible to our dying brothers and sisters in hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, hospice centers and at home. This will truly show that we are a compassionate and caring society!

Please register my voice in opposition to this ghastly legislation!

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