

My name is Katherine W. Upson, of 210 Southwest Rd, Waterbury, CT 06708. kathupson@comcast.net

My testimony regards:

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

I am an RN and a two-time cancer survivor. I am very much opposed to HB 7015, because I am fundamentally opposed to physician assisted suicide (PAS). This is the third year in a row that a bill promoting PAS has been brought to a committee of the Connecticut Legislature. Each time, some changes are made in the wording of the bill, as though tweaking the language will make the bill acceptable. There is no way, in my opinion, that physician assisted suicide should ever be acceptable and written into law. I believe that the Legislature should practice prudence and not cross the very dangerous line into physician-assisted suicide. I know that the promoters of PAS do not like to use the term "suicide" but that is actually what this legislation is about. If this line is crossed, it will have many negative effects on our culture. That is why this is much more than a simple allowance for the individual to do what they choose with their own life and death.

Here are some problems that I foresee if, God forbid, PAS becomes legal in Connecticut.

- An easing of the cultural taboo on suicide in general. This will not be confined only to those relative few who are terminally ill. It will affect teens, who already have too much stress in their lives and too much suicide. It will affect the disabled, the clinically depressed, the lonely.
- There are some patients who recover from what had seemed a hopeless situation. The problem is, even the best doctors cannot always predict correctly. If we are assisting people to suicide, we will never know if that person might have recovered. The longer I worked as a nurse, the more humble I became, because I saw patients whom we thought had no chance of pulling through, yet they did. You just cannot know for sure.

- People who are disabled or chronically ill, and are a “burden” to family, may begin to think about physician-assisted suicide for themselves, even if they don’t want it or think it is the right thing to do, because they want to unburden the family. They may begin to feel unworthy of the time, effort, and expense of being cared for. A very sad, utilitarian view of life.
- There will be abuses, no matter how the law is written. There always are; it is human nature.

As I mentioned, I had cancer myself, two different types, both metastatic. Both involved extensive surgery and chemotherapy. They occurred 14 and 12 years ago. After the second cancer, I became very depressed, and had to go on anti-depressant medication. I eventually recovered.

It is not uncommon for people going through cancer treatment to become very depressed. Two friends of mine who had the same type of cancer as I did at about the same time, also became very depressed. One of them stopped chemotherapy because of the depression. The other woman kept up the treatment, but her cancer was relentless. Both of those women died from their cancer, but peacefully, with hospice care.

Please be prudent, wise, and do no harm and do not support physician-assisted suicide in our state.

Thank you for your service to the state of Connecticut.