

The diagnosis of terminal illness has the ability to change life in an instant. It is a heavy phrase to swallow, not just for the patient, but for their families and loved ones as well. It means there is no cure and, more often than not, that your life will be cut short of the ripe old age you'd imagined. Can you imagine the weight your heart feels when you are told you are going to die? But what if there was a drug that you could choose to try that might help you live longer? What if the drug actually was a cure that had not yet had the opportunity to free someone of their death sentence? "What if?" is the question. Would you try it knowing there might be a chance it could work? I would say a resounding number of people who are staring death in the face would give it a shot. What would they have to lose? Nothing. They would have nothing to lose and everything to gain because in experimental drugs lies the hope of life.

The problem with this scenario, to which there seems a simple solution, is that Connecticut lacks a Right to Try Act. These suffering patients are not afforded the opportunity to try experimental medication. Their choice of treatment currently is limited to drugs that have been approved by the FDA. Are you aware that it can take YEARS for the FDA to approve a drug? Years...when someone is hanging by hope strings and willing to try anything. Years, when someone only has months or weeks to live. How, in good conscience can we sit idly and tell people that an experimental drug may save their life, but that they're not allowed to give it a shot because the FDA doesn't have years of documentation on it. That essentially equates to the old cartoon where someone is dangling a carrot on a stick in front of a horse knowing full well the horse will never attain it.

There are people who are dying, and are fighting to live with every single ounce of their existence. They are quite literally willing to try anything, yet their options are cut short. Here's another "what if?" to consider. What if Connecticut DID have a Right to Try Act? What if dying people WERE allowed to choose an experimental drug as treatment? Can you imagine how empowering it would feel to someone who has lost the ability to care for themselves and now depends on someone else for the most miniscule tasks? Imagine being told your treatment options are no longer limited to the handful of FDA approved treatments? That sense of empowerment brings hope. Of course not every experimental drug will save lives, but some will. Some of these experimental drugs could extend a terminally ill patient's life long enough to allow them to spend another birthday with their children, to celebrate one more wedding anniversary, to give them renewed hope to keep up the fight.

Please consider the medical challenges that people with terminal illness face in Connecticut because they are being denied the right to try an experimental drug. I know that terminal illness has touched your lives as it has so many residents. We need to support those who are suffering from terminal illness. We cannot stand in the way of their treatment, we believe that people have the human right to try any treatment option they chose (with the advice of their medical team, of course) because it is their body and their fight with terminal illness. It is time we gave our residents hope by passing the Connecticut Right to Try Act.