



## Franciscan Home Care and Hospice Care

### TESTIMONY

Submitted by Laura Borrelli, R.N., B.S.N., Hospice Director,  
Franciscan Home Care and Hospice Care  
Before the Public Health Committee  
March 20, 2018

**To OPPOSE Raised Bill No. 5417:**

**An Act Concerning End of Life Care**

Thank you, Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee for hearing my testimony opposing Bill #5417 An Act Concerning End of Life Care. My name is Laura Borrelli, Hospice Director of Franciscan Home Care and Hospice Care and a Board member and Hospice and Palliative Committee member for the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. As an RN with over 30 years of hospice experience I am vehemently opposed to Bill #5417 because it forsakes the dignity of the human person, is misleading in its presentation of the dying process and will reduce the positive impact of hospice care and services.

I thought about submitting to you my testimony from 2015 with some slight additions, but decided to offer my personal story about what is true end of life CARE. I have lived out how providing dignity at the end of life to my father-in-law, Vinny Borrelli, my Dad, Richard Diters and my Mom, Theresa Diters came as a result of caring for them through their illness AND their naturally dying process. There were the physical changes that took place with my father-in-law's lung cancer in 2013 causing his need for oxygen, my Dad's advanced Alzheimer's Disease in 2015 causing aspirations and my Mom's sudden stroke just last July causing her loss of speech. Yes they were all debilitated and in need of much hands on care. In each circumstance, it was an emotional time for me and my family that afforded us the opportunity to show compassion, provide dignity and integrate the loss of our beloved into our reality.

Allowing, three very different natural processes to develop accepted the personhood of each of our loved ones within the confines of their life's journey. Even though their human bodies were not healthy or autonomous, there was dignity and any bill that disallows for this disregards

human potential. Dignity is not provided when we, as a society, seek to legalize an act of suicide that actually has the possibility of pressuring the terminally ill into feeling they have a duty to die as to avoid being a burden. Dignity is provided when we as a society choose to journey with our loved ones through their natural process. At times, holding their diseased bodies, supporting their weakened hands to pray and giving all the opportunity to understand what true sacrifice means. This cannot be accomplished in an orchestrated death that ignores our basic human drive to love another.

The state of Connecticut ranks last for length of stay in hospice care, meaning too many people are seeking hospice care too late. If you are truly concerned about end of life care then help improve public awareness of the benefits hospice and palliative care has to offer. With my father-in-law, my Dad and my Mom we sought this level of CARE and found physical, emotional and spiritual support through the expert services of a hospice team. Was there pain? Yes! Was there suffering? Yes! These are all part of our human condition. It is my response to that pain and suffering which defines me. Do not be defined by seeking to eliminate that which is human. By eliminating the sufferer, you eliminate the humanness that connects us all. That is our ability to love beyond that pain and suffering.

In conclusion, I continue to honor and love my father-in-law, Vinny Borrelli, my Dad, Richard Deters and my Mom, Theresa Deters. That veil which separates me from them is so thin. Allow your vision of the dying process to come to a fuller understanding that it encompasses not only the physical realities, but also the psychosocial and spiritual aspects. Hospice and Palliative care can realistically meet the needs of individuals through their naturally dying process. Bill #5417 would degrade the dignity of the human person, limit hospice and palliative care and would unnaturally limit lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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