

Dear Public Health Committee on Aid in Dying:

I am writing to you today in support of HB 5417: An Act Concerning End of Life Care.

It seems that the role of a doctor to help relieve pain and suffering somehow takes a twisted turn at the end of life, and that death is somehow viewed as something to be avoided at the cost of the patient. Where as in reality, death is a natural part of life. It is the one thing that we all must do, yet when the end of life is near we are robbed of the chance to control that end and are left instead with options that are rarely personal, rarely painless and rarely peaceful.

My mother, Anne Paul Law, died at the age of 85 with a sound mind surrounded by her family. She was able to say goodbye and then slipped away in her last day, painlessly and peacefully. But her road to getting there was excruciating and heart wrenching. My mother suffered from high blood pressure and had suffered multiple strokes. She lost an eye in a fall. She was going deaf. Her hands were twisted and frozen from Dupuytren's contracture. She was incontinent in her bladder and bowels. She could not walk. Her speech was slurred.

My mother had lived a full and rewarding life, but her disabilities and disorders and dysfunction caused her to lose joy in simply being alive. Simply being alive was just too hard. So she decided, after much reflection, to stop taking her medicines. She consulted her doctor that suggested she may live 3 months without it. Hospice was contacted and her family conferred to figure out how to best support her, wondering what might actually cause her to die and how to help her navigate all those possible scenarios.

A year and a half later my mother was still waking up each morning. Her prescription with Hospice had long since expired. She was doing her best to get through each day, hoping that maybe that night, if she was lucky, she would die in her sleep. Meanwhile, her body continued to crumble. Two years after she stopped taking her medicines she knew it was time to take more drastic measures. She couldn't be patient any longer. So she decided that her only recourse was to stop eating. On October 21, 2015 my mother announced that it was the day. We contacted Hospice and they agreed to provide support. They suggested that, according to research, it may take 3 weeks, but that in her condition, maybe less.

She had four ice cubes a day to ease the symptoms and suffering of terrible thirst. But she never had another bite of food. Each day, when I arrived at work, colleagues would look at me expectantly. "How is everything?"

"We're on Day 4." We're on Day 7".

And this went on. Day 12. Day 18. Day 26. Day 35. Day 48.

My mother was able to end her own suffering, by *starving* to death, and it took 48 days.

In a civilized society a person should not have to starve herself for 48 days to gain relief. Her life was coming to an unpleasant end from her strokes and other ailments, but because fate decreed that she must suffer through an epically long final decline, she had no recourse but to stop eating. In eight other states in the U. S. her physician could have granted her peace. In such a rich, educated, sophisticated and civilized state as Connecticut, it seems incongruous that needless suffering is a product of public policy. My mother would be grateful to you for no longer forcing others to follow in her horrendous end-of-life ordeal.

Thank you.

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