

Written Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill No. 5417 AN ACT CONCERNING END-OF-LIFE CARE.

**Testimony of Tessa Marquis
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Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 5417- An Act Concerning End-of-Life Care.

I had an uncle suffering from ALS (commonly called “Lou Gehrig’s disease”) who starved himself as an alternative to the continued wasting of his body and eventual death. It was a family secret for many years since his wife could have been breaking the law by enabling him.

My grandmother, who evaded the concentration camps of Europe, had requested assisted death for several years and died after painfully breaking her hip when she was 92.

My sister clung to life for 8 years after her diagnosis with breast cancer. She had a little girl and intended to raise her. My sister was a physician and could have easily self-prescribed her own demise at any time. She elected not to.

That is why I know this is an issue of Choice.

I am concerned about my own end of life. I want to go when I want to go, not suffer in pain or drift through a doped two weeks where my family has to keep watch over my body.

Following are some portraits of those at the end of life, and descriptions of our conversations in their final weeks.



This is Gene Tepper.

He was my mother’s boyfriend for 15 years.

At 94½ years old, he wanted to die. He had a tumor growing on his kidney and was alternating between falling and sleeping. It was extremely painful to not be able to offer him a legal and safe procedure. In fact, we were afraid to discuss it over the phone or in email.

When he did die he was revived by EMTs and placed in ice for 24 hours until he was allowed to die a second time.



This is Gloria Caplucci Brown. She was my mother-in-law.

For two years, suffering from congestive heart failure and all the miseries and side effects of medication, she was constantly telling us that she wanted to die.

When she did finally die in January 2013 her final words were: “Leave me alone. I want to die.” EMTs revived her four hours later and then asked if my father-in-law wanted to keep her on life support.



My good friend Claire Phelan had Pancreatic Cancer. We were very close and had several conversations about Doctor-assisted termination of life. She was not against it, but she was not interested in the option for herself. **Hospice did a marvelous job of pain management and end-of-life nursing during her final weeks. That was Claire's choice. I deeply respect that choice**, since I dearly loved her and respected all her choices, even when I might disagree.

Claire was a very disciplined thinker, and an advocate for those suffering from mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction, and many other societal issues. Many legislators

will probably recognize her from testimony she provided in Hartford over the years and committees where she served our state. **If she had determined that she wanted to choose the time of her passing, she would have faced multiple legal hurdles which would have made it impossible to fulfill her last wishes.**

I am a great admirer of Hospice and, in many cases, palliative care may be sufficient. I have seen some medicines cause more harm than good, and I have am against unnecessarily extended death scenes.

Please keep in mind that this bill is about legalizing a measured, cautious, careful, self-determined end of life decision. Nobody can be coerced or persuaded to end their life if their family and physicians are honorable, sane, kind people.

For me, it is about individual choice and the rights of people to make that choice for themselves.

Thank you for your consideration of my viewpoint on this matter.

Tessa Marquis

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