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Re: HB 5417, "An Act Concerning End of Life Care"

Before the Public Health Committee

March 20, 2018

To the Public Health Committee:

I have been in the practice of Neurological Surgery in Connecticut since 1986, and I am gravely concerned about the danger that HB5417 poses to patients.

The Hippocratic Oath, as the bedrock of medical ethics since the establishment of the medical profession, clearly forbids doctors to participate in assisted suicide. The concept of beneficence, and human dignity, to which physicians are dedicated, compels physicians to safeguard, not kill, suffering patients.

There is indeed a "slippery slope" when it comes to euthanasia. Since Belgium legalized euthanasia in 2002, there have been multiple scandals in its misuse, and as of 2016, 50% of euthanasias are performed without the patient's consent. Most chilling, euthanasia of children has come to be an accepted procedure .

In the Netherlands, there has been an 8% to 10 % increase in "assisted death" per year mainly for dementia and psychiatric illness, clearly patients who cannot give truly informed consent to euthanasia. Of the 7,254 "assisted deaths" in the Netherlands in 2015, 23% were lacking in appropriate documentation of consent.

If you accept the premises of HB 5417, you are accepting the same legal precedent that underpinned the Nazi use of euthanasia. We all know the horrific tragedy resulting from that slippery slope. Our country in 1946 rightly judged the doctors who participated in the euthanasia of 6 million Jews, as murderers, not as compassionate caregivers. Do we now want to base our ethical standards on the same standards used by Adolf Hitler?

Respectfully, Michael E. Opalak MD