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Madame Chair and members of the committee.

My name is John Pike and I live in Middletown. I'm a licensed physician assistant, practicing at St. Francis Hospital the last 25 years, most of those years in the critical care setting. I am also the CT State Director for the American Academy of Medical Ethics. www.ethicalhealthcare.org

I'm testifying in opposition to HB 5417. Similar bills have been introduced yearly since 2013, and each time have been decisively rejected by the respective committees. This year's bill, with some clever rewording, which I will briefly address shortly, carries the same impact for physicians, patients, families and society. To date, the American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians and this state's medical society remain opposed to physician assisted suicide.

While it's important to recall the multiple failed attempts, it is imperative that the members of this committee understand why physician-assisted suicide is just as dangerous this year as it was in the past when it was rejected.

- It is dangerous to physicians, or other health care professionals, who have always had their patients' respect and trust, from the days of Hippocrates, that they will always be their healers and practice non-maleficence, that is, to do no harm. This bill acts to destroy that sacred trust and compels them instead to become complicit in their death. The healer becomes the killer.**
- It is dangerous for patients who can be made to feel that the "right to die" becomes the duty to die.**
- It is dangerous to families that are left with guilt and anger and opens the door to the worst form of elder abuse by weary or even greedy relatives worried about their inheritance.**
- It is dangerous to society: what happens when our lives are not deemed worthy to be lived by an overburdened healthcare system, or even government retirement plans? The terminally ill, the elderly, the disabled or mentally ill, perhaps even the poor - maybe one of your family - could well become targets for ending their lives. When does this slope become so slippery that euthanasia creeps in, as in other countries and is now legal in Canada. Do you know the name of the law Canada uses to carry this out? It's called "Medical assistance in dying." Does this sound familiar?**

A very important section was intentionally omitted from this bill and that is the signing of the death certificate. Previously the wording virtually mandated those signing the death certificate to commit fraud about the cause of death, stating that they should list their illness when in fact their death was caused by willfully taking their life - suicide. Intentionally not addressing this part of the legal process will continue to be confusing and, again permit falsification of the record.

This bill uses a lot of space to discuss the vetting of a potential assisted suicide victim, but it fails to overcome the ethical and moral dilemmas that I have just addressed.

Thank you for your time in considering my remarks.