

Testimony in Support of H.B No. 5417 An Act Concerning End of Life Care
March 7, 2018

Dear Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg, Senator Kennedy, Senator Logan, Representative Luxenberg, Ranking Member Srinivasan, and members of the Public Health Committee:

I, Emily Smith as a resident of Connecticut, urge the committee to vote in favor of H.B No. 5417 An Act Concerning End of Life Care, a progressive act that would greatly improve the quality of life of terminally ill patients by not forcing them to suffer more than they already do. It is the right of a mentally competent individual to make decisions that would take them out of excruciating pain, and this bill allows for that.

Most of the patients that choose to end their life with the help of a physician have terminal, debilitating diseases such as HIV/AIDS or malignant cancer that only get worse with time. Specifically, cancer patients made up 31 out of the first 43 requests for physician assisted suicide.¹ It is senseless and frankly irresponsible to force a patient to suffer when they are in a coherent position to make decisions about how they want to die. Physicians in our state have to recognize that patients have a right to autonomy when it comes to decisions being made about their health, and the right to live and die is one of the greatest exercises of this autonomy.

Many of these patients face excruciating physical and psychological pain throughout the duration of their terminal illness. Many feel as if they are a burden to their families who are forced to watch them die, others feel that they can no longer enjoy any aspect of life. Since patients already have the right to refuse treatment which essentially brings on death sooner, it should also be their right to end their life as well to alleviate suffering.

This bill is incredibly comprehensive in the guidelines it sets forth for deeming a patient to be mentally competent, so there is no room for error. Connecticut owes it to their citizens to allow them to have to autonomy to die as they please when a disease is going to kill them anyway.

I urge the committee to vote in support of H.B No. 5417 as Connecticut gives back some autonomy to those who suffer the most. Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,
Emily Smith

¹ E. J. Emanuel, *J. Am. Med. Assoc. Intern. Med.* **162**, 142-152 (2002).