

If An Act Concerning End-of-Life Care (H.B. 5417) becomes law, the right to decide how much suffering dying people must endure will pass from the state of Connecticut to terminally ill people who have a life expectancy of only six months.

Dying people often fear unbearable suffering more than they fear death. A study of Oregon's Death With Dignity Act revealed that DWDA-qualified Oregonians who filled aid-in-dying prescriptions in 2016 had three major end-of-life concerns: 1) fear of losing their autonomy (91.4%), 2) decreasing ability to participate in activities that make life enjoyable (86.7%) and 3) loss of dignity (71.4%). About 34% of these people never ingested the aid-in-dying medication. They felt comforted by the knowledge that the medication was available to them and they could decide if and when to take it.

80.4% of these terminally ill Oregonians were at least 65 years old and 76.9% of them had cancer. 89.5% of them died at home. 93%% were enrolled in hospice care either at the time a physician wrote the aid-in-dying prescription or at the time of their deaths.

A 2015 poll in Connecticut revealed that 65% of state residents supported an aid-in-dying bill that had the same safeguards that H.B. 5417 has. These safeguards include requirements that physicians determine that the dying person has only six months to live, is competent to choose medical aid-in-dying, is free from coercion to make this choice and is able to ingest the aid-in-dying medication without assistance.

Some people oppose legal aid-in-dying because of their religious and/or moral beliefs. However, some of these people change these beliefs when they are coping with their or their loved ones' terminal illness. In 2015, a Catholic state senator testified in a legislative committee hearing that he supported the aid-in-dying bill because he had felt anguished and helpless when his terminally ill mother had repeatedly begged to die.

Some dying people resort to ending their suffering by hastening their deaths. My friend's husband who was dying from prostate cancer was one of them. He starved himself to death at home.

Some people resort to illegal means to end their dying loved ones' suffering. After a man was poisoned by chemicals in an industrial accident, he was diagnosed with a terminal medical condition. He told his wife that he hoped she would help him die if he was suffering too much. When he was within days of death and writhing in pain, his wife added a medication to his IV that would interact adversely with the painkillers that the Hospice nurse was giving him. Just before he died moments later, she whispered in his ear, "I'm helping you now, darling."

I hope that you agree that dying people should have the right to choose to end their suffering through a legal aid-in-dying process. Please vote for H.B. 5417.

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