

Connecticut General Assembly
Public Health Committee

To Members of the Public Health Committee:

RE: [H.B. No. 5898](#) AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS - Public Hearing March 18, 2019

My name is Lynda Shannon Bluestein, a resident of Bridgeport for the past seven years and before that, 20 years in Fairfield. I am a 71 year old woman - wife, mother and grandmother, a graduate of the UCLA School of Public Health (MPH '77) and former Chair of Fairfield's Board of Health. I attend religious services regularly, sing in two of my congregation's choirs, and have served as President of the Board of Trustees of my congregation.

I write to you not only as a public health professional but as a woman of faith whose religious community supports the right of terminally ill patients to make their own decisions about when to die – including whether to hasten death. This position is in keeping my faith's teachings that stress the importance of respecting individual conscience and choice. My denomination's position on end-of-life issues is grounded in its teachings on the individual. Mine is a faith that honors the sanctity and integrity of the individual conscience. These ultimate questions of life and death belong with the person most intimately affected, not with the church, a legislative committee or a bureaucratic panel. I would like to live and die in peace with my religious convictions not this of others.

I believe that Connecticut residents should be free to choose how they live and, when the time comes, how they die. That is what I want for myself.

I do not want to find myself in the position of several of my friends who have chosen to stop eating and drinking in order to hasten their own death since Connecticut does not currently allow a patient to ask her physician for help.

I do not want to lose the control over my own life should a terminal illness take over my body. For the past nine months I have been in treatment for breast cancer which has included two extensive surgical procedures. I am still in treatment. My own mother died in my arms at age 79. She also had breast cancer. This bill you are considering is very much on my mind because what you are considering is how you will vote on *my* life and *my* death.

I urge you to support my right to make decisions concerning the end of my life. You may not share my religious beliefs, they are mine. I would not tell any of you, or anyone else for that matter, that you should choose death with dignity. My question for all of you today remains: Who has the right to tell me that I don't deserve this choice? Who has the right to tell me that, contrary to my own religious beliefs, I deserve to suffer for weeks or months in tremendous amounts of physical and emotional pain? I watched my mother die. She stopped eating and drinking at the end of her life to hasten her death. Why should anyone have the right to make that choice for me?

Please vote in favor of HB5898. This bill would allow a terminally ill, mentally capable adult to request life-ending medication from a doctor that the person can self-administer at a time of his or her choosing - or never - should suffering become unbearable. This is not assisted suicide and this is not euthanasia. This is supporting my right to live and die in peace with my religious convictions and not those of others.

Thank you.

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