

TESTIMONY

Submitted by Laura Borrelli, R.N., B.S.N., Hospice Director,
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Before the Public Health Committee

March 18, 2019

To OPPOSE Raised Bill No. 5898:

An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients

Thank you, Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee for hearing my testimony opposing Bill #5898 An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients. My name is Laura Borrelli, Hospice Director of Franciscan Home Care and Hospice Care and a member of the Hospice and Palliative Committee for the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. I am an RN with over 32 years of hospice experience; holding the hands of thousands of patients as they transitioned from this life. Those instances have taught me how precious and purposeful all life is through its NATURAL end. Bill #5898 forsakes this premise and falsely aligns the notion that unnatural means can provide compassion for the dignity of the human person.

I have witnessed what true compassion is and how providing for the dignity of each individual did not come from wanting to eliminate them or their perceived suffering. True compassion and dignity came from wanting to walk along with them and provide individuals with interdisciplinary hospice care through a natural dying process. I have personally experienced those moments as well with my own father-in-law, Dad and Mom. Each of whom suffered different debilitating diseases, but all provided dignity, care and never abandoned to face the reality of their dying process alone. Through each of their naturally dying experiences, my family had the opportunity to offer true compassion with care and presence as we integrated the loss of our beloved.

This process of caring for someone, allowing tears, words of love, forgiveness or sorrow freely spoken and the process of dying itself can only be fully accomplished if done so naturally. Any other way is artificial and does not bear the same emotional or spiritual benefits. Bill #5898 does not provide aid in dying but provides aid in accomplishing death. There is more to dying than the ceasing of a beating heart. There is more to bearing witness to one's love than seeking to eliminate the uncomfortable. Death is a moment in time but dying is a process that takes time. Moreover, it is in those moments that we are offered opportunity to express our full human potential. I have seen daughters and sons who initially thought they would not be able to handle the death of their loved ones grow in strength as they came to understand the importance of the process. We as a society cannot orchestrate with the same beneficial results that which occurs naturally.

I accepted the personhood of my loved ones through each of their dying process. My father-in-law, Vincent Borrelli who needed to fight until his natural end, my Dad, Richard Diters who shared his humor and love until his natural end and my Mom, Theresa Diters, although silenced by a massive stroke showed us how to be a quiet companion until her natural end. These purposeful, valuable learning experiences I now carry with me because a naturally dying process occurred. Allow your understanding of the dying process to encompass not only the physical realities, but also the psychosocial and spiritual impact it can hold. Bill #5898 would degrade the dignity of the human person, limit our human potential as a society and would unnaturally limit lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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