

March 18, 2019

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Sharon Hines and I live in Middletown. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5898, An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients.

This issue could not be more personal. I have stage IV lung cancer. I have undergone multiple chemotherapy treatments and been enrolled in 2 different clinical trials. In January, I was told the cancer in my brain has started to grow yet again. Unfortunately, I am running out of acceptable treatment options.

What you also need to know about me is, I am an oncology nurse practitioner. I have spent more than 30 years, caring for people with cancer and that includes many years in hospice.

The pain and suffering that often accompanies advanced cancer, is frequently unavoidable. I have been at the bedside of enough dying patients, including members of my own family, to know that despite the best hospice care, not all pain can be controlled, nor will every patient have a peaceful end to their life.

There is so much fear and worry that comes with a terminal illness. It's not only about how will I die or when will I die but how much suffering will I have to endure. Having MAID as an option would give me the peace of mind I so deserve. Less worry creates more time to enjoy living.

It's not just pain or as is likely in my case, struggling to breathe, that we deal with at the end of life. Loss of autonomy, loss of control, and loss of cognitive abilities, are all very real in my situation and will negatively impact my quality of life. It's important to note that no one can define the quality of life for another person.

When I was given a prognosis of 6-9 months, I knew exactly what I wanted. I already had an advanced directive. My focus has always been on quality of life, not quantity. My years of experience working with cancer patients and having thoughtful discussions with my family, medical team, and more recently, my palliative care team, continues to validate my belief that Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) should be an option for those of us with terminal illness.

At some point in my future, this disease will consume every aspect of my life and there is no doubt that it will kill me. I want to die in my own home and on my own terms. I want access to MAID, here in CT, the state I have called home my entire life. I should not, at the end of my life, be forced to become a medical refugee, to move out of state, to gain access to an option that 70% of the American people support.

I strongly encourage you to support it as well. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,
Sharon Hines
600 Arbutus Street
Middletown, Connecticut 06457