

**Testimony in FAVOR of HB 5895 (2019)**  
**AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS**

**Submitted to the Public Health Committee  
of the Connecticut General Assembly  
from Tessa Marquis, Resident of Milford, CT**

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Lesser, Senator Anwar, Representative Young, Senator Somers, Representative Petit, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this Bill. I regret that I cannot attend the hearing, since I am currently out of the state.

In previous years I have submitted testimony about the heartbreak watching elderly friends and relatives wish for death to come swiftly. But in the past year I have seen more death, both wanted and unwanted, and I have some new views to share with the Legislature.

I have gained the perspective of those who are left and those who wait.

My mother is now 90 and lives in a very nice (very expensive) assisted living complex. They have a good ritual when people die, which I have seen elsewhere but not participated in before. First they make a small display near the dining room, with a photo of the person who has died and a candle. Then they post information about a get together for remembrance in one of the Activity Rooms. At the event, which is casual, they arrange the chairs in a circle, introduce family members, and pass around a microphone so that each person has an opportunity to speak about the deceased person.

This sharing, however, is really for the family members.

What has stuck with me the most is overhearing the residents' reactions to learning one of the community has died, when that photo appears on the table near the dining room.

They say to each other one of two phrases:

"Thank goodness his pain is over" or "At least she didn't suffer"

It is not at all about the fear of dying, or the sorrow of losing a friend.

It is about pain.

All our lives we try to avoid pain, by being careful not to cut or burn ourselves when cooking – by bandaging our wounds to avoid infections – by filling cavities in our teeth – by trying not to break our arms and legs when skiing or jumping or running. We take aspirin for headaches and ibuprophen for everything else. We take muscle relaxers for pinched nerves and now have "opioids" which take away one pain and create a whole other problem. We drink and take illicit drugs to erase our mental anguish and prescriptions of all sorts to tamp down our anxiety.

But still we allow people who are in the natural process of dying to be denied cessation of their pain in a dignified and careful manner.

Many many people can come here and tell you how they eased a relative into death by increasing the morphine or helping them starve themselves. They stay silent from shame and fear of reprisal or arrest. They hide in the shadows.

At the height of the AIDs epidemic we who lived through it knew of certain very good people who helped others die at home without fear. The necessary drugs were hoarded and books were read to tell how to assist someone in that near-death inevitability.

It was pure kindness that motivated those helpers and caregivers.

We need to achieve legal care and kindness equivalent to that, in this time, with those in Connecticut who hope to achieve a peaceful, pain free death.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I would especially like to express my appreciation to those who co-sponsored this bill: Representative Steinberg, Representative Gresko, Representative Elliott, and Representative Hennessy.

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