

STATEMENT IN **SUPPORT** OF
HB 5898: AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS.
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
March 18, 2019

This statement represents my own personal views.

I SUPPORT HB 5898: AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS.

Chairperson Abrams, Chairperson Steinberg, Vice-chairs Saud, Lesser, and Young, Ranking members Somers and Petit, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee; my name is Patrick McCann and I am the Assistant State Director for American Atheists and Chair of the Secular Coalition for Connecticut. I submit this testimony in support of HB 5898.

Opposition to Medical Aid in Dying in past legislative sessions in Connecticut has typically come from 3 distinct groups: the Connecticut State Medical Society, the Disability Rights Community, and the Catholic Church. Every time this bill has come up, it has failed due to the lobbying efforts of these organizations even though polls show that Connecticut citizens want this bill to become law by a margin of 2 to 1.

This year is different.

After much considered debate late last year, the Connecticut State Medical Society has recently changed its official stance from “against” to “neutral” ... signaling its members that they should consider Medical Aid in Dying as option for the treatment of terminally ill patients.

The Disability Rights Community’s argument has always been one of fear and misinformation. The fear is understandable. The misinformation is unforgivable. In no other state where Medical Aid in Dying is legal, have any of the potential horror stories they use to sway your votes come true. Medical Aid in Dying is legal in HI, WA, OR, CA, MT, CO, VT, and Washington DC. If the disabled were being systematically killed off, don’t you think we would have heard about it by now?

Lastly, news story after news story has come out about how the Catholic Church is a global pedophile ring spending nearly \$4 billion of its tax-free tithes on payments to its victims.¹ As such, it has given up its claim to be the moral arbiter in any social debate and should have zero influence over this topic or any substantive policy debate from here on out. In any case, no religion has the right to impose its views on others who don’t follow that religion.

¹ <https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com/2015/11/04/the-catholic-church-has-paid-out-3994797060-10-as-a-result-of-the-sex-abuse-scandals/>

Please consider: the Medical Aid in Dying issue is like gay marriage or abortion. If you are against abortion, you don't ever have to have one. If you are against gay marriage, you aren't forced to marry someone of the same sex. If you are against Medical Aid in Dying, then don't take advantage of it when you are suffering in agony at the end of your life. In an open and enlightened society Medical Aid in Dying is an OPTION, like abortion and gay marriage, that should be available to those who want it.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage the members of the Public Health Committee to vote in favor of HB 5898

Respectfully,
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Chair - Secular Coalition for Connecticut
Durham, Connecticut