

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
TESTIMONY ON HB 5898

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BY BILL O'BRIEN, PRESIDENT, CONNECTICUT RIGHT TO LIFE CORPORATION

My name is Bill O'Brien. I am from Wolcott and I am vice president of the Connecticut Right to Life Corporation, a statewide organization based in Waterbury. I am speaking today on behalf of the Connecticut Right to Life Corporation in opposition to HB 5898, which would better be called the "Poison Pill, Slippery Slope to Euthanasia, Crime Against Humanity Bill."

What this bill advocates would create a radical change in the medical profession and a radical injustice in the state's legal system.

Considering the medical profession, Hippocrates, born in 460 BC, and known as the Father of Medicine, inspired The Hippocratic Oath, which states: "I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked nor suggest any such counsel."

And yet HB 5898 would allow doctors to give deadly medicine, in other words, to give patients poison, in direct contradiction to the Hippocratic Oath.

This bill would turn doctors into killers – into murderers, and set medicine back 2,400 years.

I'd like to read two quotes.

The first quote reads: "Aid in dying means the medical practice of a physician prescribing medication to a qualified patient who is terminally ill, which medication a qualified patient may self-administer to bring about his or her death..."

The second sentence reads: "... enlarging the responsibility of certain physicians... so that patients who, on the basis of human judgment are considered incurable, can be granted mercy death after a discerning diagnosis."

Which sentence comes from HB 5898? The first sentence uses the term "Aid in dying," which is from HB 5898, while the second sentence uses the term "can be granted mercy death." The two sentences sound very similar.

The second sentence is from what is known as Action T4, better known as the Euthanasia Program, signed into law in October 1939 by Adolph Hitler.

Like HB 5898, the Euthanasia Program began with several safeguards. Whereas HB 5898 requires two doctors to approve a death, the Euthanasia Program actually required three doctors. Regarding children, parents had to agree to the child's death. Within months, the safeguards were gone.

Please note that Canada legalized assisted suicide only about two years ago. Already they are talking about applying it to children. In other words, the few safeguards there might have been are already going.

In the Euthanasia Program doctors injected a toxin to kill but death certificates said they died from something else, like “pneumonia” or “appendicitis.” Like the Euthanasia Program, HB 5898 would allow doctors to prescribe a lethal dose of medicine but the death certificate would list some other reason as the cause of death.

Under the Euthanasia Program, thousands of people “judged incurably sick, by critical medical examination” were murdered by physicians. Although the program lasted only two years, over 70,000 people were murdered before it officially ended in August, 1941. However, it continued unofficially until 1945, resulting in 200,000 additional deaths, and providing the techniques and technology that was to be used in the extermination camps of the Holocaust. Following the war twenty-three physicians were eventually charged by American military tribunals in what were called the Doctor’s Trials. Sixteen doctors were found guilty and seven physicians were sentenced to death for “crimes against humanity.” Is this where we want the practice of medicine in Connecticut to go?

Concerning Connecticut’s legal system, the Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 952, Title 53a* of the Penal Code listing offenses, states:

Sec. 53a - 56. Manslaughter in the second degree: Class C felony. (a) A person is guilty of manslaughter in the second degree when: (1) He recklessly causes the death of another person; or (2) he intentionally causes or aids another person, other than by force, duress or deception, to commit suicide. (b) Manslaughter in the second degree is a class C felony requiring one to ten years in prison. I might add that if the suicide was caused by force, duress or deception, it would be murder, a Class A felony, punishable by 25 years to life in prison.

But HB 5898, which presumably will be inserted into the Public Health Code, would allow a doctor to prescribe a lethal dose of pills to aid a sick, elderly, or disabled person in killing him or herself. Presumably, a health insurance company or the government through Medicaid or Medicare would pay the doctor for making this prescription and pay the pharmacist for filling it.

Thus, under the Connecticut’s Penal Code, if I give a person a lethal dose of pills to aid a person in killing himself, I would be guilty of manslaughter in the second degree and could spend 10 years in prison. But if a doctor, pharmacist and insurance company or government do the exact same thing, they will all get paid for it, sort like a hit man would, only without penalty.

Why does a medical degree and medical license allow a person to get away with murder, or, at least manslaughter, for doing the exact same thing for which anyone else would be thrown in jail? If a doctor can help kill someone, why can’t any person help another to kill him or herself?

To have HB 5898 and Section 53a-56 in the statutes at the same time would create a schizophrenic legal system and there would be pressure to change the law and euthanasia would soon follow.

For over two millennium physicians have taken oaths to, "First, do no harm." When doctors change from being agents of life into agents of death, instead of trusting doctors with their health care, patients will come to fear them.

A German on trial for mass murder said he didn't think it would come to this. The judge replied, "It came to this when you first decided there is such a thing as a life not worth living."