

RE: HB 5898 An Act Providing a Medical Option of Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Adults

Honorable Chairmen and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Dr Herbert Ross and I live in Lyme. I am retired from 45 years of clinical practice in Internal Medicine and Endocrinology in NY State and have in that time dealt with many dying patients. I have, more than once experienced the sense of frustration and helplessness which comes when despite my best efforts at ameliorating their agony, my patients who have begged for "a way out" remained trapped in their misery.

This may concern a stranger, a friend, a loved-one, or even any of us in this room.

The record of up to 22 years administration of laws, virtually identical to the bill under consideration today, in Oregon, Washington, Montana, Vermont and New Mexico, shows no cheapening of attitudes toward the value of life, or the spreading of frivolous or malicious use of self administered lethal drugs among the people of those states. Even those who eventually die without taking these drugs report a sense of relief at having them available, should enduring their suffering become impossible for them .

If you believe that society MUST require terminally ill people to suffer beyond their endurance, despite the ministrations of Hospice or palliative care, in order to protect or improve society in some way, you will likely oppose this bill. However, I think you need to ask yourselves specifically what harms accrue by allowing aid in dying, and what societal good comes from compelling the prolongation of suffering- for it should be clear that that is precisely what the current state of law does.

If on the other hand, you believe that a right to preserve dignity in dying exists, and that forcing fellow human beings to endure unremitting degradation and agony in the last phase of illness, robs them of that basic human right, you MUST protect them and all of us by enacting this legislation.

Herein lies the crux of the question at hand. I urge you to choose for our humanity in death as in life.

Thank you for your attention.

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