

Monday, March 18, 2019

**James Russell at Public Hearing on CT Bill HB 5898:  
*An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for  
Terminally Ill Patients***

Joint Public Health Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capitol Ave., Hartford CT

My name is James Russell and I live in Ridgefield CT.  
I am in favor of HB 5898.

The following was written by a very dear friend and  
neighbor of mine who would have liked to be here  
- but cannot - because he is suffering from end-stage,  
terminal prostate cancer.

“In the state of Connecticut if you’ve been told you have  
6 months or less to live you are no longer a truly free  
person. You do not have the freedom to decide how and  
when you choose to die.

You can hope that palliative care will be enough, and for  
many of us it is, but not for everyone. This proposed bill  
does not negate the possibility of receiving palliative  
care. It is not either-or. It simply gives the terminally ill  
another choice, a way out. If life becomes unbearable  
they can chose to end their life in a peaceful, dignified

way without pain. This law would provide citizens of Connecticut that choice, that most compassionate choice, that right, that freedom, that piece of mind.

We hear of people facing devastating end of life experiences choosing to leave their homes and move to states where the law guarantees a more humane passing. Why should this be necessary? Is this what we want for the residents of our state?

Some who oppose this law seem to suggest that it will in some way affect them. So it's time for some truth telling! This law affects no one who chooses not to use it. No one! There are multiple safeguards. In fact, a similar law has been in effect in Oregon for 20 years, and used by thousands of people without a single report that it has ever been misused.

Washington State, Vermont, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Montana, and Washington DC have similar laws. These states have ruled that the right to die is just that. A RIGHT! Many polls have showed that 63 to 72 percent of Americans agree.

In states where the right to die is the law, many people chose not to use it. But just knowing that they have a choice gives them tremendous peace of mind. They know that painful suffering is optional.

Our constitution guarantees us liberty. It seems only right that Connecticut – which calls itself the “Constitution State” – join the District of Columbia and the other six states which are leading the way to ensure that their citizens have the ultimate liberty, the right, the choice to die with dignity, without pain, without suffering, surrounded by friends and family.”

I thank you for your time.

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