

GREGORY SHIMER

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February 23, 2022

State of Connecticut
Judicial Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of SB88 - AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS

To the honorable members of this committee:

My name is Gregory Shimer and I watched both my wife and my mother die - slowly - of cancer over the last few years.

I am here to support SB88 and its passage this year.

I watched my mother - Susan Shimer - die of lung cancer in the summer of 2015. She was a strong woman. A mother, wife, businesswoman and leader in the community. Three fights with lung cancer since 2011 weakened her significantly - yet she still found the strength to continue to be all that and more in her last few years.

But she suffered - a lot.

During her third round of chemo at Manchester Hospital - I picked her up that day and I saw such a frail version of my mom. She was so beaten and so tired and had the worst time getting into my car. I got her home, got her comfortable and asked her why she was doing this. She said it was for us - my sister, father and me. I told her none of us want to see her like this - to take poison everyday for three weeks to then crawl into bed and sleep for the rest of the day and suffer - no one human would wish that on someone they loved. I told her it was okay and we will be fine and to stop doing to the chemo. She smiled - she listened - she stopped and within two weeks - she died. I convinced my mother to die - because I loved her.

I watched my brave and fantastic girlfriend for several years and wife for more - Tracey Gamer-Fanning die of Brain Cancer in October of 2018. This woman was also a force. In addition to being a mom, stepmom, aunt, community leader, friend, fashionista, wife, member of the American Board of Internal Medicine and Co-founder of the Connecticut Brain Tumor Alliance - she helped thousands of families and hundreds of patients around the State of Connecticut face the truth about brain tumors and brain cancer - that it is not just a cancer of an organ, but a cancer of the soul. It takes away so much - not just your usual parts, but affects your personality, motor skills, emotions, initiate strength and more and it's insidious too - it creeps up on you until it pounces and then its too late.

She was given three-to-five years to live - she made it over 12 years.

I am grateful for that time for my wife - so very grateful, painfully grateful. I am beyond grateful for all that my mother had given to me and done for me as her son - but I would have ended their suffering far sooner if that power was allowed in the State of Connecticut.

Life is a god-given right - but so is also free will. That was a the greatest gift that God gave us - the ability to choose for ourselves.

Tracey and I talked about this ad nauseum. that she does not want to be a vegetable, unable to move or eat or breather without help - she made me promise, more than once, that she will not end of that way. I did everything I could to make that happen. She died at home, with her family and friends around her, peacefully and comfortably.

But before that - there were the late nights of loosing control of her bowels in the bed, constant vomiting and pain, halluciantions that our long-dead cat was climbing the walls, the howling and the crying. The worst of it all - the part that no one remembers to tell you are the death throes. When they can no longer swallow on their on and begin to choke on the phlegm inside their throats - I will never forget the sound that it made and the rancor it caused. Her mother had to see that - her mother.

I dont want to hear about slippery slopes. I don't want to hear about how this law could be used in a fashion that could be evil or wrong.

the arguement here is about choice - its that simple. I would place the question back on all of you or the people testifying today or all the people watching this or reading about SB88. If you knew you were going to die in a manner that requires significant suffering, displays of pain and anguish and monstrous levels of indignity - wouldn't you at least be comforted by the fact that you can choose to painlessly end it before it begins? To be able to say goodbye in the manner that you choose, not what others choose for you long after you cannot speak.

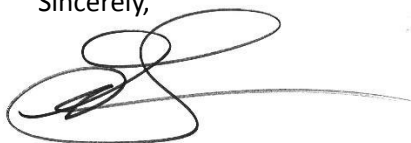
How would you choose to die? Anyone rational would choose dignity, comfort and love - anyone rational.

Not the way that we do it now.

I ask that you pass this bill, SB88, in honor of the people who have died and suffered in the past and for the people of the future - who deserve more.

Respectfully,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory Shimer', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gregory Shimer