

Testimony of Peter Wolfgang, President of Family Institute of Connecticut Action, Against S.B. 88, the Assisted Suicide (“An Act Concerning Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients”) Bill

Good morning, members of the Committee. For the seventh time in nine years I am here to testify against the legalization of assisted suicide. It is bad public policy that puts vulnerable people, the elderly and the disabled, at risk. For them, the “right to die” could well become the “duty to die.”

The Public Health Committee used to understand this. You heard directly from those most at risk from a legalization of assisted suicide and you let the bill die without a vote every year since 2013. Until last year, when assisted suicide passed out of the Public Health Committee and died elsewhere in the legislative process.

That is the most likely scenario again this year. That this Committee will again pass assisted suicide and that it will again die elsewhere. Reasonable people have wondered aloud about the wisdom of the Committee in putting everyone through this again, given those and other circumstances.

But the proponents of assisted suicide claim that circumstances have changed in Connecticut. Let us examine one of the most trumpeted of those claims.

It is claimed that 75% of Connecticut voters now support “medical aid in dying.” This is false.

The number is based on a March 2021 poll by GQR, a firm founded by Stanley Greenberg, husband of Congresswoman DeLauro. On its website, the firm brags of how its polls bring about “progressive” victories. Here is how GQR asked the question:

Voters were asked if they support: “legislation [that] will allow people with less than six months to live to request medication from their doctor that they could decide to take to end the dying process *that patients find unbearable.*”

Note the part I emphasized. The poll equated support for assisted suicide (“medical aid in dying”) with ending someone’s pain. Who among us would say they support continuing a person’s pain? Even we who oppose assisted suicide do not support keeping a patient alive by extraordinary means against that patient’s will.

What we oppose is licensing doctors to prescribe lethal drugs—suicide—as a treatment and granting legal immunity to the people who help you kill yourself. That is what S.B. 88, and every previous assisted suicide bill, does. But you won’t see the GQR polling firm ask Connecticut voters about that.

The deception about public opinion in Connecticut is nothing new for the proponents of assisted suicide. They have been doing it all along.

In 2014, assisted suicide proponents touted a Quinnipiac poll purporting to show 61% support among Connecticut voters. Marist did a more detailed and more accurate poll later that year that refuted those findings. You never hear about the Marist poll when this Committee brings up the assisted suicide bill every year. But you should.

On Assisted Suicide/aid in dying--and I should note Marist used neither term, but rather, the same language as other polls--70% of state residents do not see it as a significant issue or one that state government should address. A majority of state residents oppose it, 55% to 38%. By 46-32 percent, fewer residents would trust their doctor if he or she were willing to prescribe lethal drugs. And both Marist and the Q poll agreed that most of those polled would not want to end their own lives by Assisted Suicide.

That one point of agreement between the two polls is significant. For an issue this personal, the standard for passing a law should not be what people want to happen to others. Under such a regime the "right to die" could too easily become the duty to die.

The Marist poll is almost entirely about Assisted Suicide, unlike the Q poll which tacked on three or four questions at the end of a 50-plus question poll on a range of issues. But at least we know what else the Q poll asked.

The GQR poll (the one claiming 75% of Connecticut supports assisted suicide) is something of a mystery. We know what one question was and what number it got because those results appear on Compassion and Choices' website. Curiously, the actual poll does not appear on GQR's own website. I was not able to find a reference to it anywhere after a search of the GQR site.

Unlike the Q poll, or the veiled-in-mystery GQR poll, Marist's poll is better suited to understand this complex, layered issue. Even the Q poll's own press release talked about how personal Assisted Suicide is--all the more reason why Connecticut deserved a poll like Marist's, which took the time to understand the true support and opposition around this issue.

I also note that Marist's respondents, unlike the Q poll, are not just voters or people who have the patience to sit through 50 questions on other topics before answering questions about Assisted Suicide. How many elderly people and people with disabilities were left out of the Q poll because they could not sit through all those questions? The Marist poll appears to be a more reliable indicator of what Connecticut residents really think about Assisted Suicide. And the GQR poll seems to be the least trustworthy of them all.

To be sure, there are many people who do support assisted suicide. The support is a mile wide and an inch deep. The moment you start to break it down for them, they change their minds. Once they learn the sort of things this Committee will be hearing from other opponents of S.B. 88 today, most people actually oppose assisted suicide.

One final note. As you know, the coalition against assisted suicide is ideologically broad, containing both progressives and conservatives. Here I speak from my twenty years of experience as a conservative activist in Connecticut.

There are many other bad causes I oppose. But I have never doubted that there is grassroots support for those bad causes. That there are real, actual movements of people in Connecticut dedicated to those causes.

Assisted Suicide is not like those other causes. It is the most astroturf cause I have ever fought against in Connecticut.

Where are the people marching in the streets for the right to hasten their own death? Where are the pro-assisted suicide speakers at rallies for intersectionality on the Left?

You never see them. They don't exist.

Assisted Suicide is a small cause driven by a small, but very well-heeled, organization. They are powerful enough to inundate our media with one-sided propaganda and to muscle their bill through this Committee.

But that is whose bidding you are doing when you are advancing the Assisted Suicide bill. It is not some groundswell to which you are responding.

This Committee should do better. As it once did. You should stand against this powerful interest, stand for your most vulnerable citizens, and vote no on S. B. 88.

Thank you.