

February 25, 2023

Members of the Public Health Committee:

RE: SB 1075 HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE, and
RE: SB 1076 AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS

I am Lynda Shannon Bluestein, a resident of Bridgeport and a long-time supporter of both Hospice/Palliative Care and Aid in Dying Legislation. I'll begin with a story.

The elderly mother of a close friend of mine called her early one morning. When my friend saw on the Caller ID it was the assisted care facility's number, her heart sank, expecting bad news.

"Hello," my friend answered, but before she could speak, she heard her mother's voice on the end of the line.

"Oh Denny," her mom pleaded, "why can't I just wake up dead?"

That's a question I heard from my father when his labored breathing from end stage congestive heart failure was robbing him of any hoped-for planned exit from his suffering. That's a question repeated over and over, to caregivers, family, friends of those struggling with terminal illness.

I am currently under the care of a Palliative Care Team including a physician, social worker, and chaplain from Smilow/Yale. I am in Second Line chemotherapy for recurrence of late-stage Fallopian Tube Cancer. Both bills being discussed today, Hospice/Palliative Care and aid-in-dying, are exceptionally important to me and my family.

I am a longtime advocate for individuals' rights to make their own choices regarding end-of-life care. Now, as someone for whom this is no longer a theoretical question, I pray that this year ALL members of the Connecticut General Assembly will have the opportunity to represent their constituents across the state and finally cast a vote in favor of this bill. CT residents who support aid-in-dying legislation do, in fact, constitute the majority in our state.

I want to see Connecticut finally get this bill passed, this year, in time for me. I want to be able to look forward to an end of life where I will be able to remain in my home, surrounded by my husband, my children, and grandchildren as well as my neighbors, friends, caregivers, and members of my faith community. When I, like so many before me, have just wanted "to wake up dead," I want it to be at home and at peace.

As my health declines and my days grow short, I am profoundly disappointed by the hijacking of the democratic process by those whose views on aid in dying represent a *minority* of people in CT. Yet, in past, years, they have successfully mounted arcane legislative pathways that have allowed them to block a vote on aid-in-dying in the General Assembly that would certainly pass without their maneuvers.

Members of the Committee, and those present today virtually and in person, I can well imagine having that question form in my mind one day also. "Why can't I just wake up dead?"

It's not as if my death is optional. Yours either. It's also not as if I would choose to seek out medical aid-in-dying did I not have a terminal diagnosis.

With hope,

Lynda Shannon Bluestein

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Bridgeport, CT