

HB0903
FAVORABLE
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Dear Delegates,

“A physical or mental disability, age or chronic illness should in no way diminish an individual’s right to life, human dignity, and equal access to medical care”

This line of the bill sums up very well how we are to approach the care and treatment of our fellow human beings. We need to use critical thinking to determine the best course of healthcare treatment for our brothers and sisters, not dollars and cents. No one can predict the length of treatment and total cost at the beginning of a person’s care or in the midst of a crisis. Futility is never certain. Medical care must help not harm. We all know stories of people who lived when told they wouldn’t or people who recovered quicker and more fully than predicted. As our brother’s keeper, we must always do what is right and just to preserve the dignity and well-being of the person in need. Whether it is the baby who survives abortion or the comatose person or the chronically ill person, the goal of healthcare must be to preserve life, not cause death by withholding appropriate care.

When given all the information regarding the condition of a hospitalized person and the treatments and outcomes, family and/or proxies are quite capable of making appropriate decisions. When my mother had cancer, she started out with receiving surgery and radiation and the treatments worked. It was 5 years before the cancer returned. She started with chemo and other therapies but when we realized some of the treatments were more harmful than helpful, those treatments were stopped. Eventually, it was clear where the disease was going. Our goals switched to palliative care until she passed away. Along this cancer journey, we adjusted the care plan.

As a nurse who worked in the ICU at both Sinai and St. Joseph Medical Center, I participated in discussions with patients and/or families regarding resuscitation orders and care protocols. Understanding the wishes of the patient combined with comprehensive medical information, patients and families make excellent decisions. As the condition of a patient changes, for better or for worse, patients and families can modify the plans.

The laws of the State need to reflect a moral, legal and ethical obligation to protect the dignity of every human being. Please think about yourself and your loved ones and how you would like to be treated. I urge you to respect the rights of patients and families to make medical decisions and vote in favor of House Bill 0903.

Thank you.