

SB845/HB933 End of Life Option. OPPOSED

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Patrick Durkin. I am quadriplegic and ventilator dependent. Many of you might question my quality of life, because I can't do all the physical things I could before my accident.

You might think that I am suffering from a loss of autonomy because I depend upon so many family, friends, and medical personnel for my daily health care.

I want you to know that I would feel insulted if you thought that I have lost the dignity of life because of my physical condition.

My condition was caused by an accident at the beach in August 2009. Two and a half days after my accident I was at the University of Maryland Shock/Trauma Unit struggling to breath. I was drowning as my lungs literally were filling up with my own congestion.

My body couldn't keep up with the amount of congestion being produced. The hospital provided a bed so that my loving daughter Kelly could lie down facing me so that she could help suction me. There I was lying face to face with my daughter unable to breathe. I remember asking myself is it worth it to keep fighting to stay alive. Maybe I should just give up.

Then, as I lay looking at my daughter, who was helping me, I realized that life is too precious just to give up, and my daughter's life was too precious for me to give up.

During my recovery, at a different hospital, I remember encountering a physician who wanted to release me from the hospital even though I had pneumonia and a secondary infection and was on a ventilator. I thought that was diabolical. I want to live and I don't want a physician to think that he or she should help me to "release" myself from this beautiful life as a cost saving measure for the insurance system.

It would have been cruel to me, my friends and family, for the medical profession to offer suicide as my alternative.

I have had 14 years since a rogue wave changed my life at the beach in August 2009. My firm goal in this second phase of my life is to warn bathers of the danger of those rogue waves at the beach, like the one that injured me. I also spend my time reaffirming the dignity of human life to those around me.

What would have happened to me if I had not overcome the depression initially afflicting me as I lay drowning in my own congestion? What would have happened to me if that physician I encountered thought he could get away with pushing me “to release” myself.

Physician assisted suicide is not compassion. It is taking advantage of patients when they are most vulnerable. My fear is that it will normalize the idea that medical care is too expensive for those suffering from physical disabilities.