

Oppose HB 933 / SB 845

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In 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2020, my husband and I testified against the End of Life Option Act because assisted suicide would put our loved ones in danger. Our daughter had once planned to end her life by overdosing and we kept all our medications under lock and key. When we testified, we only had time for part of our story but today I want to share with you more.

Dying early, before your time, may be the worst type of death. My father-in-law, Tom, died this way. We share a little of his story in the documentary we created about the Maryland Bill. You can see it on our website – www.TheDignityMandate.org/documentary Tom was given 6 months to live by a doctor who said his cancer had spread to his liver. We sought a second opinion and found his cancer had not spread and he qualified for a Whipple Procedure that was very invasive and was more likely to kill him than save him. He agreed to have the Whipple procedure and, against all odds, he lived another 10 years cancer free. Insurance companies have denied coverage of cutting-edge treatments in favor of inexpensive lethal drugs in Oregon and California. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/oct/20/assisted-suicide-law-prompts-insurance-company-den/>

How will medical breakthroughs like the Whipple procedure ever be realized and perfected if they are no longer covered by insurance? The lethal pills will always be the most inexpensive form of treatment, and it usually stops the disease dead in its tracks. I say usually, because the 2021 Oregon Report states one person regained consciousness. (page 13 under complications <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PROVIDERPARTNERRESOURCES/EVALUATIONRESEARCH/DEATHWITHDIGNITYACT/Documents/year24.pdf>)

After 10 years, my father-in-law developed a different form of Pancreatic cancer. Again, with only 6 months to live, he lived 1 ½ years before a trip to the emergency room because of shortness of breath brought him face to face with the doctor who set him up to die early.

The doctor offered to put in a pace maker to “help” my father-in-law. After the surgery, we waited for 2 days in intensive care for the doctor to come to the room and answer our questions. As chance would have it, I ran into the doctor leaving the hospital cafeteria.

I said, “ Hey, you’re the doctor who put a pace maker in my father-in-law and you have not stopped back to see how he is doing. We have some questions for you.” He said, “Your father-in-law was a sick man. He was going to die anyway.” I asked, “Why did you do the surgery then?” - and he walked away without answering me.

What a sham and a shame for a doctor to treat a cancer hero with such disdain. My father-in-law died the next day. It was the day we were scheduled to take him home to be on hospice. It was the day before his birthday. Our children never got to say good-bye because they were not allowed in the hospital. This callous doctor robbed us of our last family birthday together. This is the day I stopped trusting doctors.

This doctor did not know my father-in-law. He did not care that he had beat pancreatic cancer once and he was a survivor. All he saw was a man on borrowed time. He thought - I should take advantage of the situation. If he dies, it will not matter - "he was going to die anyway".

If you pass this law, you not only allow doctors to act in this way, you actually assume some doctors will want to act this way and give them the means to do it without legal recourse for the family. Why would anyone want to pass a law that would require at least some doctors to work below the expected ethical standards of the profession? Maybe the law would not force any doctor to do it, but it does expect some doctors to fulfill the duties of the law. This will erode the trust and confidence we have in all doctors, because everyone will always wonder if they are dealing with a "death" doctor.

Proponents of this bill think this is a personal choice that does not affect anyone else but that is simply not true. This law will change the way we all face death. We will face new pressures. People like my father-in-law will no longer be seen as heroic, but as selfish and they will be mocked for continuing to live and wasting their grandkid's college fund to keep their old, ragged bodies alive. It will change the professional expectations of people in a broad range of professions, including doctors, hospice care givers, assisted living care givers, coroners, insurance agents, psychiatrists, psychologist, pharmacists and many more.

Do not pass this bill to appease the select few who fear having a difficult death and want to die in a specific way. Do not allow the media and large well-funded national organizations to lure us into believing killing ourselves is dignified and doctors who help hasten death are compassionate. This law would open the door to so much harm. It is not needed and you will not be able to fix the problems it will create.

Please give HB 933/ SB 845 an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,
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