

SB0485 Testimony

SB0485 -written testimony 3/7/2023

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Position- Unfavorable

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In a perfect world, someone asking for a physician to assist in their death would have a clear mind with no pressure to cloud their decision. We don't live in a perfect world.

Not everyone asking to die will be surrounded by compassionate family members.

It will not always be the bedside scene with hands being held lovingly.

It is common sense and a simple understanding of human nature to know there will be real life 'end-of-life' situations that will not have compassion or dignity. A very 'real life' scenario may have one or several of the following possibilities. An elderly person who does not have support is diagnosed. They don't have the assistance of others to have a second opinion. People can be diagnosed wrongly or live years past the doctor's estimate.

They feel that they are a burden to their family anyway. The family may hint at this. They may be in some stage of dementia. Individually, without their families, they make a decision that is not "truly informed."

We hope that all medical professionals are ethical and not swayed by costs or revenue, however, there is human nature. Recently, zoom calls have been used to make decisions with diffusing the personal doctor-patient relationship. Doctors are limited in their time to access patients. A network may develop of doctors who can enable the outcome easily. The right wording can sway a patient.

You will have the ability to go to the pharmacy by yourself, go home alone and take the many many pills alone. Anti-nausea pills are needed because the prescription is poisonous to your body. Perhaps you don't die quickly, but have the impact of the poison. With no required medical assistance or doctor, will you die in fear and terror? Where is the dignity of dying alone?

You may believe you should not inform your family. However, they may love you dearly and do not believe you are a burden. They may find you and are absolutely devastated. This is the kind of devastation that can tear up families for the next generation and cause imaginable sorrow.

The best of intended safeguards will go only so far. They open the possibility of others comparing their own situation and sharpening the focus on their own pain. "My Mom and Dad helped my grandmother die, so why can't I try it?" says the confused, overwhelmed teenager. One 'compassionate' death situation impacts not just one family, but many families, a community and state. Once legislated, who will honestly tell the story of the confused lonely person given a prognosis of terminal illness who has dementia and killed themselves alone?

The website of Compassion and Choices states "Many people regard being confused all the time as a fate worse than death." On January 29, 2023, the respected Alzheimer's Association terminated their partnership with Compassion and Choices, an advocate of this legislation. In a statement they said "We deeply regret our mistake and have started the termination of the relationship, and apologize to all families we support who were hurt or disappointed."

The values of Compassion and Choices impact this legislation. The word compassion means to "Suffer Together or Suffer With" - not just give you the means to kill yourself alone.