

Testimony in opposition of Senate Joint Resolution SB0845 - William Zwart.

Good afternoon, Honorable Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is Will Zwart, and I am testifying in opposition to this bill.

On the surface, it does not seem that there are any groups that would experience undue burdens from granting certain individuals the freedom to kill themselves or have themselves killed.

This is false.

Even giving the option for assisted suicide or lethal injection can create a large number of burdens to those who may be pressured to choose death when they really do not want it. This pressure can come from external parties who may purposefully or accidentally suggest or propose assisted suicide. I shall list some examples now.

Vulnerable Groups who may be made Victims by this Bill:

1. People who are likely to be pressured to commit assisted suicide by relatives or others who may have something to gain.
 - a. If euthanasia is made legal, it opens the door for mal-intended relatives to either subtly or blatantly suggest it as “the responsible thing to do,” “Your medical expenses are getting too high,” or “You are depriving the world of medical resources which could be used for much better purposes.” This pressure should be considered an “undue burden to die” because the vast majority of people want to live, and most of those who make suicide requests reverse them when their pain and depression are treated properly.
2. People with limited financial resources.
 - a. If assisted suicide is an option, the government and insurance agencies may choose to curb payment for end-of-life treatments in favor of paying for assisted-suicide. If this happens, people with limited financial resources will suffer discrimination because they will be pressured to avail themselves of it merely because of their financial condition. This is already happening in Oregon.
3. People with low self-esteem who have no moral conviction against suicide
 - a. Those with low self-esteem (especially of the younger generation) are more likely to hear and receive the most negative suggestion made by an authority figure, such as a doctor. If such a figure gives a person with low self-esteem the choice between palliative care and euthanasia, that person may hear a

subliminal message: “The doctor thinks I deserve to die, so I’ll kill myself.” Such a person is not mentally free to “choose” to die, and so the supposed “choice” becomes an implicit imposition.

4. People who are suffering from reversible depression.
 - a. A common, reversible state most often found during terminal illness. The depression and anger generally subside or disappears altogether as depression is treated and patients move closer to succumbing to the terminal disease. We are not ourselves when upset or depressed, and should not be enabled in making rash decision.
5. People who see themselves as “stoic heroes.”
 - a. Such people as these loathe dependency and weakness, and would rather die than admit either, preferring to “end it all while I’m still strong,” and could choose assisted suicide without consulting friends or family. This would load survivors with all the trauma of a suicide, while ignoring the possibility that the “hero” and his relatives and friends might together discover higher levels of purpose in life.
6. People who are victims of inadvertent cruelty.
 - a. Perhaps a mother, given a terminal diagnosis and the option of assisted suicide, turns to her daughter for advice. The daughter, not wishing to impose her values on her other, says, “Choose whichever you think is right, Mom. We’ll support whatever you want to do.” The mother thinks, “That’s all I mean to her?! She doesn’t care if I live or die?! Then why go on? I’ll end it all.” What was intended to be supportive and nonjudgmental was construed as the ultimate rejection. Again, the option of assisted suicide can result in an unwelcome decision to die.

These are just six major groups of people who will be harmed by this bill, as taken from *Ten Universal Principles*. For these reasons and the many others that stand opposed to assisted suicide, I urge you to vote against this bill.

Thank you.