



new york state **RIGHT TO LIFE COMMITTEE, INC.**

COMMITTEE

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New York State Right to Life Strongly Opposes Assisted Suicide

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New York State Right to Life strongly opposes the so-called “Medical Aid in Dying Act” because it legalizes assisted suicide, which is a prescription for death for the most vulnerable. NYS Right to Life opposes assisted suicide and any legislation that promotes killing those we cannot cure, no matter what it is called. There are significant legal issues with this bill, and so-called “safeguards” have failed in other states.

- Assisted suicide inherently devalues people approaching the end of their lives by paving the way for them to kill themselves. It divides the human family into subgroups of worthy of protection and unworthy of protection and even creates the legal mechanism for the latter group to be disposed of.
- Under this legislation, health insurance companies can cover the lethal drugs which are inexpensive. Insurers in states where this practice is legal routinely cover the minimal cost of the lethal drugs. In California, when a woman’s insurance company would not cover her prescribed chemotherapy treatment, she inquired if assisted suicide was covered under her plan. She was told, “Yes, we do provide that to our patients, and you would only have to pay \$1.20 for the medication.” [1]
- Under this legislation, in order to qualify for assisted suicide, a person would have to have “an incurable and irreversible illness or condition that has been medically confirmed and will, within reasonable medical judgment, produce death within six months.” However, prognoses of how long someone will live are famously unreliable. Additionally, this definition would permit people who could live for years to apply for lethal drugs. Many common illnesses, disabilities, and conditions, if untreated, can cause death in a reasonably short amount of time.

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- Numerous disability advocacy groups oppose assisted suicide, and with good reason. Those with disabilities, who are often seen as having a “low quality of life,” and other at-risk populations, could be either unable or unlikely to share their fears with outsiders or to reveal that they are being pressured by caregivers or family to request suicide. Further, the protections in this bill for people with disabilities are woefully inadequate. The bill states “No person shall qualify for medical aid in dying under this article **solely** because of age or disability” (emphasis added). This implies that age and disability can be significant factors in a person qualifying for assisted suicide so long as they are not the sole reason. The ongoing case of *United Spinal Association et al. v. State of California et al.* shows that assisted suicide laws are a false solution for the real problem, an ableist society placing the fundamentals of a fulfilling existence out of reach for persons with disabilities.
- Prior to writing a lethal prescription, a doctor can make a referral if he or she thinks that the patient is suffering from a psychological or psychiatric disorder or depression. Even if a counseling referral is made, under the proposed language, a mental health professional can determine that a patient does suffer from a mental disorder or depression, but if he or she believes the person still has “decision-making capacity to make an informed decision,” he or she can still approve the patient for a lethal prescription.
- This legislation mandates falsification of documents. Those who die by assisted suicide are recorded as having died from an underlying illness or condition, not the true cause of death, a lethal cocktail of chemicals.
- Even with so-called “safeguards” in the legislation, recent history shows that assisted suicide proponents will seek to remove these safeguards. For instance, potential legislation in California would allow intravenous infusion of lethal drugs (which crosses the line into euthanasia), expand eligibility for assisted suicide in cases of “grievous suffering” to those with a life expectancy greater than six months and allow those with mild-stage dementia to receive lethal drugs. Similar court cases have been filed.

Citation: [1] Bradford Richardson, “Assisted-suicide law prompts insurance company to deny coverage to terminally ill California woman,” *Washington Times*, October 20, 2016. Available at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/oct/20/assisted-suicide-law-prompts-insurance-company-den>. (Last accessed 3/6/21.)