

Members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Carolyn Bennett and I am here to urge you to reject HB 5417.

It is an unchangeable and undeniable fact that every person, someday, will die. No person knows when the hour of death will come. With all due respect, doctors can really only guess when a person will die. With a wealth of knowledge and life experience, they can make predictions, but they cannot know for certain. In fact, they have many times been known to guess incorrectly. A friend of our family was diagnosed with cancer and given six months to live. She lived for three more years. However, while misdiagnosis, human error, and abuse are major problems with the proposed legislation, these are not my main concerns. My main contention with this bill is the moral, ethical, and spiritual consequences of allowing people the right to die.

Why does the fact that a doctor “knows” a person will die within a certain timeframe make it right for that person to commit suicide? Under any other set of circumstances, if a person had a terminal illness and the physician decided to end their life, that would be murder. How does the permission of the person make it not murder? Or self-murder: suicide.

Our founding fathers, in their wisdom, said, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Notice that the “right to die” is not listed there.

In reality, the only difference between a terminally ill patient and anyone else, is the amount of hope that they have. Theoretically, we have the hope of overcoming sickness and hardship to live a better life, while the terminally ill do not. However, this should not affect the value of life. It is not an act of compassion to let a hopeless person know that we agree “your life has no value”. To assist others to commit suicide is actually a very selfish act, because after all, it’s cheaper to let a person die than to provide care for them. Are we becoming a society that says life is only valuable as long as you are strong, healthy, and smart? Doesn’t that sound rather like Nazi Germany? Their goal was to have a perfect society--they killed the weak, the physically and mentally disabled, and the aging. Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

May future generations be able to look back through history on our generation and say that we sought to preserve and promote with dignity the value of life.