

Dear Committee Member,

This is my testimony opposing the intent of HB 5417 for Assisted Suicide. I am Nancy Elliott. I am a former 3 term New Hampshire State Representative and the Chair of Euthanasia Prevention Coalition USA

The three groups that are the target for Assisted Suicide are the sick, the elderly and the disabled. While there are many other problems with this kind of law, I am going to focus in on these three today.

It is said this is only for the sick and dying. One of the biggest problems is people who qualify for Assisted Suicide are not necessarily dying. Think of a 21-year-old otherwise healthy insulin dependent diabetic. He qualifies if he rejects his insulin. This would be the same for many other people with serious conditions, who take prescription medications. What about all the curable cancers? They qualify. What about the 5% of incorrect medical diagnosis? With Assisted Suicide on the table these mistakes can be deadly.

I was at an oral submission on Assisted Suicide in Massachusetts a few years back when a gentleman named John Norton gave evidence, that as a young man he was diagnosed with ALS. He stated that had Assisted Suicide been legal at that time he would have used it. A few years in, the disease's progression just stopped. Now in his late 70's he stated he has had a great life with children and a grandchild. With Assisted Suicide on the table he would have lost all of that.

Steering is a big deal with all three of the groups that I mentioned. At that same Massachusetts proceeding, a doctor stated that Assisted Suicide laws were something he was in favor of. He continued with his points and ended by saying that He felt it was the responsibility for a good doctor "to guide people to make the right choice". I do not think he intended to say that, but is there any doubt that this pro suicide doctor would try to persuade his patients to follow his wishes concerning their Assisted Suicide.

These laws are abusive in their very nature. To suggest to someone that they should kill themselves is abuse. My husband was terminally ill and I went to a lot of doctor appointments with him. If medical personnel were to suggest Assisted Suicide to him, he would have been devastated. While he never would have done that, it would be like saying to him, "You are worthless and should die. That is abuse! The proponents say that would never happen, but that did happen to an Oregon woman named Kathryn Judson. She had gone to a doctor's appointment with her seriously ill husband and exhaustedly sunk into a chair where she overheard the doctor pitching Assisted Suicide to her husband with the clincher, "Think of your wife." They left and never came back. The husband went on to live another five years

Next seniors are at risk and very easily fall victim to coercion as the process is very open to that. In most states, heirs can be there for the request and even speak. Anyone can pick up the lethal dose. Once in the house all oversight is gone, there is no witness required at the death. Even if they struggled who would know. If that is not enough, the death certificate is falsified to reflect a natural death. All the information is sealed and unavailable to the public. Even if someone suspected foul play, the death certificate says no crime here. Taking advantage of seniors is epidemic in the States. Look at the case of Thomas Middleton. He made Tami Sawyer his trustee and moved into her home. Within a month he was dead by Oregon's Assisted Suicide law. Two days after his death Ms. Sawyer listed his house and sold it and deposited the money into three companies she owned with her husband. We will never know if or how much coercion or foul play took place in this case.

Finally those with a disability are at risk. Most people that "qualify" for Assisted Suicide at that point in their life have a disability. Many with long term disabilities have been labeled terminal all their lives. Without meds, treatments, and assistance they would not survive. This is about disability. If you have a disability you are encouraged to give up, commit suicide. If, on the other hand, you are young and healthy, you are given suicide counselling. This is discrimination against people with disabilities. Why should they trust that they will not be coerced into Assisted Suicide, when they are already discouraged to seek treatments and are not treated fairly? When you think about it this is a law that is written just for them. It is a "special" carve out, for the sick, elderly and disabled.

In closing, I just want to add that Assisted Suicide has been rejected in over 100 legislative, ballot initiative and judicial attempts in the USA, including my state New Hampshire. The more it is studied the more uncomfortable people become with it.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this bill. Please reject HB 5417. It is bad public policy

**Nancy Elliott
Chair - Euthanasia Prevention Coalition - USA**