

MN House Health Finance and Policy Committee
State Office Building, Room 5
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I have grave concerns about HF1930 based on my own experience as a person with a disability.

In 1980, as part of my job working with urban youth, I took a group of girls to hear a young quadriplegic, who painted beautiful pictures by holding a paintbrush in her mouth. We were all impressed, but I remember telling the girls, “I could never live as a quadriplegic.”

Those words would be tested a few months later when I also became paralyzed in a car accident. I spent the next year and a half in various hospitals and rehabilitation centers, dealing with serious medical issues and learning to live as a quadriplegic.

During that time, I fell into a deep depression. I thought my life was over and I just wanted to die. But I’m so grateful that assisted suicide was not available, and that those around me listened compassionately to my longing to die...and then gave me what I really needed – good medical care, counseling, access to disability services, and lots of prayer and loving support.

My life has not always been easy, but it’s been *good*. I’ve enjoyed opportunities to teach, write, serve in various organizations, and develop meaningful relationships with people and with God. I’m grateful to be alive.

This law currently applies only to people with a terminal illness. However, guidelines in other places have expanded from terminal illness to include people with disabilities. In Canada, a paralyzed veteran requested a wheelchair ramp. She was told that they could not provide a ramp, but they could offer her medical aid in dying.

We need to pause, and ask ourselves, *once we open the door to this type of legislation, what is to keep it from expanding like it has in other places?*

When people feel like death is the only way out, we need to offer them hope and practical help. A compassionate society doesn’t let them jump off that bridge, and it certainly doesn’t encourage them to jump. When a person is facing overwhelming problems, we need to eliminate the problems, not the person.

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