January 24, 2024

To the MN House Health Policy and Finance Committee:

My first experience with death was when my father died from cancer. I was 19. He died in excruciating pain which lasted unabated for 4 months. It was then that I became interested in legal remedies for end-of-life suffering.

I am a retired Clinical Psychologist and spent the last 12 years of my career working at Allina Health with medical patients. During that time I had a number of patients who were chronically ill and some who had terminal illnesses. All of these people were in extreme pain, both physically and mentally. They expressed anguish that they were not ready emotionally to die, but knew they were going to die. Some talked about actively wishing for a legal way to end their lives peacefully when they could no longer deal with the suffering. Some expressed anger that they were forced to endure such misery with no hope.

I became aware of Compassion & Choices after I retired. I believe the legislation they are working to  get passed will allow people who are terminally ill, with 6 months or less to live, who have the capacity to understand their situation make a choice for a peaceful death.

Regarding the question of suicide vs. MAID, many experts believe suicide is an action a person who is medically well takes, where as MAID is an action a person who is going to die might take in order to mitigate the last bit of suffering and die peacefully as they will die in any event.

Thank you for allowing me to provide a fuller picture of my reasoning for supporting this bill.

Penny A. Pergament, Psy.D.

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