

Michael Blissenbach Testimony Against H.F. 1930
Health Finance and Policy Committee– Public Hearing January 25, 2024

Dear Chairwoman Liebling and Members of the Committee:

My name is Michael Blissenbach, and I am a 37-year-old man from Apple Valley, MN in House District 56B. I live with a mental health disability called Unspecified Trauma and Stressor Disorder, which is similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I take two different medications each day to manage my condition and I require accommodations at work under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) in order to be able to do my job.

I strongly oppose both physician-assisted suicide (PAS) and HF 1930 because, as we've seen play out in Canada, Belgium, the Netherlands, and other countries that have legalized PAS, whether intentional or not, PAS establishes a legal regime where the life of anyone not able-bodied is a life not worth living, a form of discrimination called ableism.

As an amicus curiae brief filed on behalf of a coalition of disability rights groups in the New York case *Myers v. Schneiderman* states: "By asserting that it is irrational for a non-disabled person to end his or her life, but rational for a disabled person to do so, appellants argue that the non-disabled person's life is intrinsically more valuable and worthwhile than a disabled person's life."

This should give us all pause.

Moreover, in Canada, our neighbor to the north, PAS and euthanasia eligibility criteria will expand in March to include mental health conditions like my own. Just like PAS proponents are seeking to do here in Minnesota, Canada initially only authorized PAS for those with terminal illnesses, but, once it was legalized for the terminally ill, PAS eligibility has been incrementally expanded to include more and more groups who don't fit our society's definition of perfection.

To make matters worse, we also know that in places where PAS is legal, for people who fit the eligibility criteria and don't want to take their lives, economic and social pressure will be applied to attempt to convince them to do so. This is done either through health insurance covering assisted suicide drugs instead of lifesaving or life-extending treatment, or doctors attempting to convince patients that they are better off dead than alive.

Therefore, although HF 1930 doesn't directly threaten my life or access to quality healthcare as written, I have no doubt that, if this bill passes, it will, in a few years' time, through court decisions or subsequent legislative enactments, threaten both of those.

I am indeed an economic net burden on society, but I'm a lot more than that. I am a human being with inalienable dignity, who loves his friends and family, is active in his community, and who brings joy to the lives of many, and the same is true of every human being that HF 1930 directly or indirectly would regard as "life unworthy of life."

Disabled people like me don't want assisted suicide, and we don't want pity. We want to love and be loved and to be seen as the valuable members of society that we are. HF 1930, in contrast, devalues and degrades the lives of people with disabilities. Please stand up for the dignity and rights of people like me and oppose HF 1930. Thank you for your consideration.