Physician Assisted Suicide

To the distinguished legislative committee members:

There are many reasons to reject physician assisted suicide as a Minnesota statute, but let me emphasis just one.

The option of physician assisted suicide very quickly becomes the obligation of physician assisted suicide.

I am a family practice physician who has been in practice for 35 years and the most frequent concern of my older patients is that they not be a burden to their families as they progress to needing more care. PAS becomes a begrudged recourse. Their families on the other hand seldom see the additional care needed by their parents as a burden but rather as an opportunity to express their love and respect for their parents and depriving them of that opportunity would be detrimental to both parties.

PAS could also prevent what can sometimes be the most significant interval in a person’s life from the standpoint of important conversations and restoration of relationships.

Let me please share with you my own family story. My father sailboat raced with me until he was 85. He made his last pheasant hunt with my brothers and I, caring a gun, when he was 88. He was incredibly fit. Shortly thereafter he lost a lot of his physical abilities. It was so abrupt that He didn’t deal with the change well and started asking multiple doctors to end his life. Obviously all refused but if PAS had been legal in Minnesota I have little doubt someone would have complied. That would have been very sad for our family and others who knew my father. Over the next 3 years of his life he blessed many people who got to listen to his whistling in the nursing home and with hymns at church. My youngest brother who had not had a good relationship with my father started spending more time helping in his care and there was a significant change in their relationship. My father had pain in his last year but it was well controlled with analgesics. He sat across the table from my mom and encouraged her to eat and held her hand while watching TV. I was holding his hand at 92 when he died a natural death. All this would have been missed with PAS.

There are lots of ways to make the end of a person’s life more comfortable and even enjoyable. Please do not let physician assisted suicide become an option in Minnesota.

Thank you for serving the people of our state.

Respectfully,

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