



Minnesota Psychiatric Society

Improving Minnesota's mental health care through education, advocacy, and sound psychiatric practice, and achieving health equity.

December 13, 2023

Representative Edelson and Senator Morrison,

The Minnesota Psychiatric Society (MPS) has had the opportunity to meet with Rep Edelson (virtually), meet with Rebecca Thoman of "Compassion & Choices", review the literature, and discuss your proposed MAID bill (SF 1813 & HF 1930) several times. Overall, most of us feel that clarifying and enhancing patient autonomy at the end of life while providing adequate safeguards and checks/balances is laudatory and reasonable.

Psychiatrists are extensively trained in the details and nuances that go into determining capacity to make medical decisions (such as this) and to determine competency in other realms.

Capacity is assessed on a sliding scale. If the importance of the decision is low (e.g. taking Motrin for a headache), there is little emphasis on the ability of the person to make the decision. But when the risk is high (e.g. is this person in renal failure competent to refuse dialysis or is this individual who just murdered someone competent to stand trial), the stakes are higher, and there is a lot of emphasis on making sure the person understands the impact of their decision. MAID is a high impact decision (some would argue the highest impact) because the decision is to extinguish life. Therefore, it is very important that capacity assessments be left to professionals who have demonstrable training and competence in making capacity assessments in high risk / high impact decisions. Social workers/counselors are not allowed to make capacity assessments in other medical areas and as far as we know they are not allowed to testify in court in MN as experts about such matters.

We strongly encourage you to NOT add a totally separate and controversial issue to the bill allowing medical aid in dying. Please consider dropping that clause in the current bill.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Trangle".

Michael Trangle, MD, DLFAPA
MPS Legislative Chair
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