



Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

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Dear Representative,

We write to urge your support for H.Con.Res. 79, a measure that highlights the dangers and discrimination inherent within assisted suicide laws. This bi-partisan resolution, which also has strong support from the disability-rights community, highlights the diverse consensus among progressives and conservatives against assisted suicide. We join our voice to that of the National Council on Disability in urging Congress to clearly state that assisted suicide puts everyone, particularly people with disabilities, at risk of deadly harm. And we urge Congress to ensure that all persons with disabilities or illnesses who are facing the end of their life and who are often unfairly targeted for assisted suicide, have access to high quality, life-affirming, and comprehensive health care.

It is worth noting that in states which have permitted physician-assisted suicide (or “aid in dying” as it is sometimes euphemistically called), suicide contagion has led to an increase in all suicides across the state. Similarly, pain medication, patient and family satisfaction with end of life care, and hospice quality and availability have all decreased in states with assisted suicide. Additionally, states that treat assisted-suicide as a health care choice are experiencing heartless financial decisions by insurance companies who deny coverage for costly treatments, long-term services and supports, and other benefits while offering to pay for deadly drugs to end the lives of terminally ill, aging, and disabled patients. This has been documented in both state-provided and privately-run insurance companies. To learn more of the abuse and discrimination inherent in assisted suicide, see the National Council on Disability’s recent report:

https://ncd.gov/sites/default/files/NCD_Assisted_Suicide_Report_508.pdf

The act of prescribing a fatal dose of pills, moreover, undermines the very heart of medicine. Doctors vow to do no harm, and yet assisting in a suicide is the ultimate abandonment of their patients. Seriously ill patients—who often experience depression—need our authentic support, including doctors fully committed to their welfare and pain management as they enter their final days. Patients also need assurance that they are not a burden -- that it is a privilege to care for them as all people hope to be cared for one day. A compassionate society devotes more attention, not less, to members facing the most vulnerable times in their lives.

Every suicide is tragic, whether someone is young or old, healthy or sick. But the legalization of doctor-assisted suicide creates two classes of people: those whose suicides are to be prevented at any cost, and those whose suicides are deemed a positive good. Society removes weapons and drugs that can cause harm to one group, while handing deadly drugs to the other, setting up yet another kind of life-threatening discrimination. This is completely unjust. One’s fundamental human rights and intrinsic human dignity do not wane with the onset of illness, age, or incapacity, all must be protected.

For these reasons, please support H. Con. Res. 79 to expose the deadly, discriminatory and non-compassionate practice of assisted suicide in our nation.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann
Archbishop of Kansas City
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities

Most. Rev. Paul S. Coakley
Archbishop of Oklahoma City
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and
Human Development