

CONCERNED
WOMEN *for* AMERICA
LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE

February 1, 2021
House Human Services Committee
Testimony in Opposition to HB1415

Chairman Robin Weisz and members of the Committee, my name is Linda Thorson, and I am the State Director for Concerned Women for America (CWA) of North Dakota. We are the state's largest public policy women's organization and our country's largest public policy women's organization with hundreds of thousands of members. I am here today on behalf of our North Dakota members in opposition to HB 1415, relating to physician-assisted suicide.

Concerned Women for America has established the sanctity of life as one of its seven core issues on which we focus our efforts. CWA supports the protection of all human life from conception until natural death.

Physician-assisted suicide devalues human life. There is no "death with dignity" when a person is helped to end their own life; suicide is still suicide, no matter how you spin it. God, and God alone, is the author of life. We must not take on the role of God and take life based upon our inconsistent judgment.

Here are just some of the many concerns we have about [physician-assisted suicide](#):

- It is not possible to have sufficient safeguards against coercion and elder abuse. At least one in [ten older adults](#) is the victim of domestic abuse, which is difficult for a healthcare provider to identify. Because any doctor can write a lethal prescription, an abuser can "doctor shop" until they find a provider willing to assist them in killing their victim.
- Oregon, the first state to legalize assisted suicide, provides the most complete data available on the practice of assisted suicide in the United States. [Oregon reports](#) that individuals primarily choose assisted suicide because of reasons related to a disability: loss of autonomy, loss of enjoyable life activities, and loss of dignity.
- Modern medicine has made significant advances in pain control. Doctors now have a range of options to treat pain in terminally ill patients, including even palliative sedation as a last resort.
- [Oregon reports](#) that the dominant reasons motivating patients to choose assisted suicide have nothing to do with pain management. The primary concerns center around having a disability: losing autonomy (92%), being less able to engage in activities making life enjoyable (90%), and losing dignity (79%). Fear of inadequate pain control is one of the patients' least cited reasons.
- A physician will also have to play the role of God to conclusively determine the timeline of a person's life, regardless of how conclusive a diagnosis may seem at any given time.
- Physician's assisted suicide preempts the possibility of a favorable change in the patient's health. It also might be so premature that we can erroneously make a permanent decision based on a temporary health situation.

- There is no guarantee in this bill that the adult resident, as defined, would not give this same medicine to someone else, whether that other person was even aware that they had been given this medicine. In other words, there is no guarantee that the original adult who obtained the prescription would not somehow decide to encourage or force someone else, even a child, to consume this medicine.
- A patient who declines or is unable to notify their next of kin may not have their request for medication denied for that reason. (23-06.7.07)

Victoria Reggie Kennedy, the widow of Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy, “Physician assisted suicide is not about bringing family together to make end-of-life decisions; it’s intended to exclude family members from the actual decision-making process.”

Sen. Kennedy spent a great deal of his career focusing on health care policy. His wife Victoria spoke out powerfully against patient suicide after his death. She remarked that she did not wish to preach or judge others in their decisions but wanted all to know the facts.

Assisted suicide devalues life, diminishes care, and disincentives research. We must stand against it in our state.

God has given us the gift of life; He is the only one who can take it away. We cannot take on the role of God and take life based on our inconsistent judgment.

We urge your “Do Not Pass” vote on HB 1415. Your consideration of this request is appreciated.