



MASSACHUSETTS
CITIZENS FOR LIFE

**Testimony in Opposition to H.1926/S.1208 (End of Life Options Act),
given before the Joint Committee on Public Health**

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Chair Mahoney, Chair Comerford, ladies and gentlemen of the committee: my name is David Franks, Chairman of the Board of Massachusetts Citizens for Life. It is as an expert in social ethics that I speak to you today.

Mass. Citizens for Life rejects the notion that killing can be a solution to social problems. Normalizing killing betrays solidarity and social justice.

Physician-assisted suicide is a form of killing that might seem attractive. But we must acknowledge that how we face death is not simply a private matter. Our choices are always shaped by social conditions, and always have social ramifications.

There are good reasons to want to die. Who would not want, say, to escape overwhelming psychological suffering?

Yet historically have we not done well to remove suicide from the menu of choices allowed our loved ones in crisis?

But ours is now a libertarian age, where both right and left reject the claims of solidarity.

We cannot remain at our post in life if we are alone and if the wider community does not provide support.

Normalizing suicide denies the claims of human solidarity.

And physician-assisted suicide *is* suicide.

Two provisions of the current bill seek to wave away this fact as if by magic.

1) "The attending physician may sign the patient's death certificate which shall list the underlying terminal disease as the cause of death."

2) "State regulations, documents and reports shall not refer to the practice of aid in dying under this chapter as 'suicide' or 'assisted suicide.'"

But the cause of death *would be* suicide. And aid in dying *is* assisted suicide.

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said..., “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.”

Please consider how corrosive it would be if you, our legislative representatives, insert into law a bald assertion that a thing that is so, is not so. That dishonesty will work like a cancer, undermining community and solidarity, allowing us to withdraw, individually and as a society, from our responsibility to those who are desperate.

Solidarity and love require that we absorb the suffering of others by our unremitting presence to them, and affirm the absorption of our suffering by others.

Solidarity and social justice are not doing very well these days. Legalizing physician-assisted suicide will radicalize that trend, the trend to leave behind the poor, the addicted, the refugee, the hopeless, the forgotten, the disabled, the depressed, the medically dependent—all of us who might be losers in the power games of the world.

Choices are made in concrete contexts of power.

If a woman feels as if she doesn’t want to be a burden anymore, must we not ask what misogynistic conditioning might be involved?

Must we not take in earnest the constrained healthcare options of racial minorities and the working poor?

Must we not consider whether legalizing physician-assisted suicide will lead to suicide contagion, especially in a country already in the grip of a suicide epidemic?

Physician-assisted suicide is suicide. And suicide is a ghoul that must be fought relentlessly. For it haunts, like the very Furies, those who are most owed our care, those for whom the agony of this world has become a thing most intimate. As a society, we must not abandon the suicidal. Do not give suicide a beachhead in our laws.

Please do not advance these bills.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

Respectfully submitted,
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