

Ariana Costa

From: Amanda Staruk <astaruk1@yahoo.com>
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To: House Judiciary Committee; Meredyth Whitty
Subject: Lila Sapinsley Act testimony

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Good afternoon,

My name is Amanda O'Connor and I've been a RN in Rhode Island for almost 11 years, 10 of which I specialized in hospice care. I took care of hundreds, if not thousands, of people through their end of life journeys in their homes and I promised many of them that if the option of physician-assisted suicide was ever presented in this state, I would stand on the front lines and fight for it. For them and for our future. I would be there tonight to testify in person, but I have a prior commitment to attend.

To keep this brief, the fear of end of life is greater than the HOW it will happen to terminally ill patients. It's the WHEN. Some people get terminal diagnoses weeks before they pass and those last few weeks are filled with anxiety, anguish and fear of the unknown. I believe it is a basic human right to choose to end one's life under certain circumstances. If you are pro-choice, this is any easy decision. Suicide is inevitable and I have seen it a handful of times over my 10 years in hospice. Some overdosed on their opioids, one shot himself in the head in his front yard and my latest sat on his motorcycle in his garage and inhaled the fumes. This is no way to end their lives on top of a terminal diagnosis. I saw my last patient the day before he took his own life and spent four hours in the home trying to get manage his symptoms. His exact words were "we treat our dogs better than we treat our humans" and as an avid animal lover, I wholeheartedly agree.

With access to this medication, a patient can CHOOSE to end their life on their terms, with whoever they want by their side. I have had patients participate in "end of life parties" where they have one final gathering and make it a party, but the rest is a waiting game that is confusing and stressful to the patient and family taking care of them if they are not already in the medical field.

Please consider voting YES to pass the Lila Sapinsley Act and allow terminally ill patients to control how (and when) their disease process ends. They can choose to participate in med trials, they can choose how they manage symptoms, I believe they should be able to choose when the actual death occurs after seeing *how* it actually occurs for the past 10 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amanda O'Connor, BSN RN