

**Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 7760
House Judiciary Committee**

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We are Not Dead Yet, a grassroots disability rights group that opposes assisted suicide and euthanasia laws. On behalf of the good people of Rhode Island, we urge the House Judiciary Committee and the Rhode Island State Senate to say NO to H.B. 7760.

Like all other assisted suicide laws, H.B. 7760 discriminates against people with disabilities and institutes eugenics as public policy. It allows physicians to write people with terminal illnesses - and only people with these disabilities - a prescription for death. Whatever reasons lawmakers have for supporting legalization of assisted suicide, they cannot stand. Under federal disability rights law, there is never a justification for “separate but equal” treatment for people with disabilities.

H.B. 7760 fails to protect patients from abuse and coercion. H.B. 7760 allows will beneficiaries, relatives, and other financially interested people to be witnesses to the written request for assisted suicide. It fails to prevent people with mental health conditions that increase suicidal ideation from requesting assisted suicide. It creates no oversight for assisted suicide. Its few limitations only ensure patients understand the drugs are fatal and hear about palliative care they might not be able to afford. It protects physicians from liability but not patients from being coerced into choosing death.

H.B. 7760’s authors seem to assume assisted suicide is requested in a vacuum in which all patients have perfect access to care, and all doctors know the law by heart. The reality is far different. The National Council on Disability’s 2019 report on assisted suicide demonstrated as much.

In their darkest moments, people with disabilities in states that have decriminalized assisted suicide are often offered it, while people without disabilities are given suicide prevention instead. People with disabilities frequently must guard themselves against medical futility and disability bias from doctors who treat their lives and futures as less valuable. State reports on assisted suicide from Oregon confirm that people with disabilities are not using assisted suicide because they want to die. Instead, our broken

healthcare system reinforces the idea that it is rational for them to kill themselves due to the absence of care it should have been providing to begin with.

Rhode Island's lawmakers must instead fight for affordable health care and equal access to the supports and services that help people with disabilities live. Doing otherwise, in our view, justifies those who claim that life with a disability is a fate worse than death.

Rhode Island is widely known as a diverse, welcoming state. It is time for Rhode Island to welcome its disabled citizens as well by saying NO to H.B. 7760 and YES to comprehensive palliative and long-term care funding.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Kelly Israel