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My name is Michael Gates, I'm soon to be 64 years old; and I'm DYING.

I have been diagnosed with ALS Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease. For those who are not aware, it is a disease that is 100% fatal; all the time, every time. It's not only a death sentence, it's also a slow agonizing death. I have lost use of my legs and my arms and trunk and neck muscles are quickly dying. I have lost my ability to speak and now use an eye tracker to type on a keyboard which will then speak for me. Soon I will be unable to swallow. I will be paralyzed and my breathing will stop as the muscles that enable all of us to breath will fail.

Now let's talk about the dignity part. Have you ever had to have your colon and intestines manually cleaned out. And then after be unable to control your bowel movements and then have to watch your wife have to clean up the mess of what is a dead weight 230lb man who she has been married to for 40 years. Both of us sobbing while doing this. Moreover, I now have a Foley catheter which she also has to empty. She has to use lifts to pick up and move me to bed or give me a suppository and then use the lift to move me to the commode. You see, it's not about me, it's about my loved ones and what I'm putting them through. Not to mention my two granddaughters who are almost forgetting what Papa used to be like while they watch this disease progress.

I was a Cranston police officer for 30 years. I was an adjunct professor for 7 years. I coached youth sports for 10 years. I was that guy who was non-stop and now I sit in a chair 16 hours a day. I think I should be able to decide when I've had enough and no longer burden my family and friends. The only thing that I have control of should not be denied me and others like me. It's not suicide, I know of many ways to do that. It's wanting to gain some dignity back. It's about having my family around me while we say goodbye and fall off to sleep.

I beg of you to allow me to make the decision.

Respectfully,
Michael