



Testimony Opposing House Bill H 7760  
RI House Committee on Judiciary  
April 30, 2026

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

The Rhode Island Catholic Conference offers this testimony in opposition to House Bill H 7760. The Rhode Island Catholic Conference offers this testimony in opposition to H7163. The Conference is the public policy representative of the Diocese of Providence, which encompasses nearly 600,000 Catholics statewide, their parishes, schools, nursing homes, and numerous charities, which combine to form our state's second-largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. Thousands of Rhode Islanders of all faiths and none benefit daily from the Catholic Church's charitable works.

The Church specifically opposes Physician-Assisted Suicide because it seeks to legalize the intentional taking of human life; this deliberate activity violates the most basic tenet of our belief in the sacredness of life and simultaneously poses many dangers to vulnerable populations. A truly caring community devotes more attention and support to members facing the most vulnerable times in their lives; when the sick, elderly, and vulnerable are tempted to see their lives as less valuable, they most need the love and assistance of others to assure them of their worth.

Some patients in states where assisted suicide is now legalized have been told that their health insurance will pay for assisted suicide but will not pay for treatment that may sustain their lives. Physician-assisted suicide endangers the weak and marginalized in society, especially the poor, minorities, the elderly, the mentally ill, the disabled, and the terminally ill.

Assisted suicide creates two classes of people: those whose suicides we spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year to prevent, and those whose suicides we assist with and treat as a positive good. We remove weapons and drugs that can cause harm to one group while handing deadly drugs to the other, setting up yet another kind of life-threatening discrimination.

Legislation has been introduced in the Rhode Island General Assembly to require the RI Turnpike and Bridge Authority to design "a safety barrier and/or safety netting" on the Pell, Jamestown, and Mount Hope bridges. ("She couldn't stop one man's jump. Now she's fighting to add suicide barriers to RI bridges," G. Wayne Miller, The Providence Journal, April 1, 2022). Also, efforts continue in our state to reduce the rising rate of suicide among U.S. Military Veterans. ("In 2020, 14 Rhode Island veterans died by suicide. New program wants to reduce that number," G. Wayne Miller, The Providence Journal, September 27, 2022).

House Bill H 7760 stands in stark contradiction to these more laudable efforts to prevent suicide among Rhode Island's most at-risk people. Vulnerable people who deserve society's assistance are instead offered accelerated death with the legalization of physician-assisted suicide.

The Catholic Church teaches that physician-assisted suicide gravely violates the sacred value of all human life, particularly those vulnerable due to illness, age, race, or disability, and undermines the medical profession's healing mission. "A choice to take one's life is a supreme contradiction of freedom, a choice to eliminate all choices. And a society that devalues some people's lives, by hastening and facilitating their deaths, will ultimately lose respect for their other rights and freedoms." (To Live Each Day with Dignity, A Statement on Assisted Suicide, USCCB, June 2011)

Respect for life does not demand that we attempt to prolong life by using medical treatments that are ineffective or unduly burdensome. "Nor does it mean we should deprive suffering patients of needed pain medications out of a misplaced or exaggerated fear that they might have the side effect of shortening life." (To Live Each Day with Dignity, A Statement on Assisted Suicide, USCCB, June 2011) Instead, it demands that we respect life as a gift by not actively seeking an artificial means to end it.

For Christians, other religious believers, and many people of goodwill, dying is not an evil to avoid at all costs. It is a step in a journey that continues in the next life with God. But even those without faith can recognize the intrinsic value of human life. They can see that suffering people need solidarity and support more than a loaded syringe and an easy exit. They need their dignity affirmed by being loved and encouraged to hope, not attacked by allowing their despair to reach its limit in self-killing. They need relief from pain and discomfort, not relief from life itself.

A compassionate path forward is to support dying persons by alleviating their suffering through palliative care, hospice care, and other comprehensive programs. The reason many seek to end their lives is the difficulty in accessing quality palliative and hospice care. Working with our legislature, our state can address this. Real compassion demands we invest in and ensure access to excellent pain management and holistic support for the terminally ill, allowing them to live their final days in comfort and peace, surrounded by family, friends, and other emotional supports. Access to community palliative care services should be mandated and readily available. We support increasing funding for these programs and ensuring they are of the highest quality possible.

We also believe that within a few short years, the alleged safeguards of this legislation will no longer exist. Other states eventually eliminated their state residency requirement, thus opening assisted suicide to anyone in the world. Other safeguards have fallen, too. For example, if the law allows one to end their life due to a terminal illness, what is to stop a court or future legislature from allowing a person suffering from a chronic illness to end their life. What stops someone who just wants to stop living from accessing medical assistance to do so?

That has been the case in Canada, as all its safeguards were eliminated. In 2016, there were only a little over 1,000 assisted suicide deaths in Canada. Less than a decade later, there were 15,000. Similarly, other US states have been slowly eliminating safeguards. We fear that once assisted suicide is legal, it becomes an acceptable alternative to both compassionate care and to mental health treatment that might encourage potential suicides to consider a different path. Aiding someone in killing themselves is not the answer. Alleviation of suffering is the answer, the true compassionate choice.

As citizens, we need to build the common good of our entire society and advance the dignity of every human life, especially the terminally ill, not attack it with legalized assisted suicide. Therefore, we ask that you reject House Bill 7760 and its attempt to legalize assisted suicide for the most vulnerable in our state

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Director