

HELP STOP ASSISTED SUICIDE BILL

Brothers, please call Senator Robert M. Gordon at (201) 703-9779 or

> email him at sengordon@njleg.org (Link: senaddiego@njleg.org

>) and ask him to vote against the assisted suicide bill

> euphemistically called "The Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill Act"

> S382/A2270 Listed below is the United States Council of Catholic

> Bishops' summary of the problems with this bill.

> Vivat Jesus,

> Jim White

> NJ State Council Religious and Civil Rights Committee Chairman

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> EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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> Like other proposals to legalize assisted suicide, New Jersey's A2270

> is seriously flawed.

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> • A2270 would facilitate the destruction of people who are sick,

> instead of reasonably and compassionately addressing their health

> problems. The bill overlooks the availability of medical and

> pharmacological means of relieving pain and suffering, and could

> compromise efforts to ensure that pain relief is available to all

> who need it, causing greater pain and suffering to terminally ill

> patients and their families. The people most likely to suffer are

> those already marginalized in the delivery and receipt of health care services.

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> • A2270 would allow the assisted suicide of patients even when

> depression or other mental health problems have been diagnosed. When

> their depression is treated, once-suicidal patients are usually

> grateful that no one assisted their suicide. The bill would

> undermine attempts to treat the true underlying causes of suicide

> requests, and result in deaths that are not truly voluntary or

> consensual. Suicide is rarely, if ever, the "voluntary," "competent," and "uncoerced"

> decision that proponents of assisted suicide claim. The incidence of

> significant psychiatric morbidity among suicidal patients has led

> many health practitioners, including former proponents of assisted

> suicide, to conclude that "rational" suicide is an oxymoron. A2270

> would also not require involvement or notification of family members,

> who may be entirely unaware of their loved one's suicidal wishes
> until it is too late.

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> • A2270 purports to authorize the assisted suicide of persons
> expected to die within six months. Such predictions are notoriously
> inaccurate—patients predicted to live only a few months often go on to
> live for years—and will result in the deaths of many people who are
> not terminally ill, including those who could live a long and
> productive life with appropriate medical treatment. In addition, the
> bill would create a culture encouraging suicide generally. After
> legalizing assisted suicide for persons with terminal illness, for
> example, Oregon saw a spike in suicide rates among its general
> population even excluding persons who took their own lives under that
> State's assisted suicide law.

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> • A2270 reflects an unfortunate bias against persons with
> disabilities and serious illness. The Nation's and New Jersey's
> consistent tradition of protecting innocent human life against
> intentional killing should not be suspended for them or for any other class of citizens.
> The only court to decide the question has concluded that a law
> withholding from terminally ill patients the same legal protections
> from suicide that the majority enjoys violates the guarantee of equal
> protection.

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> • A2270 lacks meaningful protection for the conscience rights of
> health care providers, including religiously-affiliated facilities
> that do not wish to participate in or facilitate assisted suicide.

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> • A2270 is a radical departure from the common sense, reason, and
> compassion that should inform public policy decisions about how best
> to care for persons who are sick and dying.

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> Imprint

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