

July 17, 2017

Bette Crigger
CEJA Secretary / Administrator
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Tel: 312-464-5223

Dear Ms. Crigger:

The Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF), a leading national law and policy center on disability civil rights, has worked against the legalization of assisted suicide since 1999.

We understand that the AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs (CEJA) is meeting in November 2017 to consider physician-assisted suicide issue, and is requesting input.

We have gathered for consideration by CEJA what we believe to be the most critically important medical voices on this issue: articles and testimony conveying the soundest research and most well-argued conclusions of authoritative and insightful physicians who have spoken out against the legalization of assisted suicide. We ardently hope CEJA members and staff will read their insightful words.

Specifically, you will find two lists below:

1. The best articles by doctors written for the layperson, as well as the most penetrating testimony, expressing why assisted suicide laws are dangerous and harmful, and should not be passed.
2. Statements of professional medical organizations against the legalization of assisted suicide.

These authors express as well as anyone could, why the AMA should maintain its current policy against assisted suicide laws. We hope CEJA agrees.

Please let us know if you have any questions. I can be reached at 510-549-9339, or mgolden@dredf.org.

Yours truly,



Marilyn Golden
Senior Policy Analyst, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)

Part I: Physician's articles written for the layperson about why assisted suicide laws are dangerous and harmful, and should not be passed.
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A. Physician-Assisted Suicide in Oregon: A Medical Perspective

By Herbert Hendin and Kathleen Foley

<https://dredf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Hendin-Foley-Michigan-Law-Review.pdf>

This important article from Michigan Law Review, June 2008 describes how "seemingly reasonable safeguards for the ... protection of terminally ill patients written into the Oregon law are being circumvented ... primarily [due to] the Oregon Public Health Division, which is charged with monitoring the law."

Authors:

Herbert Hendin is Chief Executive Officer and Medical Director, Suicide Prevention International, and an international expert on suicide prevention.

Kathleen Foley is Attending Neurologist (retired), Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; Chair of the Society of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center; and Professor of Neurology, Neuroscience, and Clinical Pharmacology, Weill Medical College of Cornell University; and an international expert on palliative care.

B. Testimony of N. Gregory Hamilton, M.D.

<http://www.pccef.org/articles/art32HouseOfLords.htm>

To The Select Committee on the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill

Dr. Gregory Hamilton's testimony focuses on problems posed by assisted suicide for people with mental health disabilities. Dr. Hamilton is Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and Co-founder of Physicians for Compassionate Care.

C. Testimony by H. Rex Greene, MD in Opposition to Neutrality on AB 651

<https://dredf.org/public-policy/assisted-suicide/opposition-to-neutrality-on-ab-651/>

This testimony by Dr. Rex Greene to the California Medical Association regarding a 2006 assisted suicide bill addresses professional ethics, public policy, and

medical quality concerns in the Oregon assisted suicide law, the basis for proposals that are regularly introduced across the nation.

Dr. Greene is the former Medical Director of the Dorothy E. Schneider Cancer Center at Mills Health Center in San Mateo, California; formerly a member of the AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs (CEJA); and a leader in bioethics, health policy and oncology.

D. Psychiatric Times: "Commentary: The Case Against Physician-Assisted Suicide: For the Right to End-of-Life Care"

<http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/articles/commentary-case-against-physician-assisted-suicide-right-end-life-care>

This article from Psychiatric Times is another excellent article by Dr. Herbert Hendin about Oregon and the Netherlands.

E. California Oncologists Position Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide and Opposition to AB 374

<https://dredf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Oncology-Statement-on-AB-374-Berg.pdf>

This statement by the Association of Northern California Oncologists and the Medical Oncology Association of Southern California was written in opposition to a bill considered by the California legislature to legalize assisted suicide.

F. Suicide contagion and its relationship to assisted suicide

<https://dredf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Kheriaty-Letter-to-Legislators-re-AB2x15.pdf>

In his letter to the California Assembly, Dr. Aaron Kheriaty describes the risk to people with mental health issues as well as the danger of suicide contagion.

G. Current Oncology: "Legalizing euthanasia or assisted suicide: the illusion of safeguards and controls"

<http://www.current-oncology.com/index.php/oncology/article/view/883/645>

This overview found that, in countries and states where assisted suicide or euthanasia has been legalized, safeguards are ignored, hundreds of deaths occur without consent, half of all cases can go unreported, and the practice has been extended to newborns, children, and people with dementia.

H. The Wall Street Journal: A Doctor-Assisted Disaster for Medicine

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/a-doctor-assisted-disaster-for-medicine-1439853118?mg=id-wsj>

This op-ed by Dr. William Toffler in the Wall Street Journal provides his perspective as an Oregon doctor on the flaws in Oregon's law.

I. Death Law Would Turn Family Doctors into Hit Men

<https://dredf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Dr-Bernhoft-in-Ventura-County-Star-8-25-15.pdf>

This op-ed by Dr. Robin Bernhoft describes how assisted suicide can be the result of poor doctoring.

J. Don't Follow Oregon's Lead: Say No to Assisted Suicide

<https://dredf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Charles-Bentz-M-D-Hawaii-Reporter-2009.pdf>

In his letter to the Hawaii Reporter, Dr. Charles Bentz describes the poor treatment received by his patient under the Oregon law, entreating another state to reject an assisted suicide law.

K. JAMA: Why Physicians Should Oppose Assisted Suicide

<http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2482333>

This article from the Journal of the American Medical Association focuses on the traditional physician's role and also explains that, where assisted suicide is legal, pain is not a reason patients resort to it.

L. Don't make our mistake: Dutch watchdog who once backed euthanasia warns UK of "slippery slope" to mass deaths

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2686711/Dont-make-mistake-Assisted-suicide-bill-goes-Lords-Dutch-regulator-backed-euthanasia-warns-Britain-leads-mass-killing.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

M. Canada: "New Assisted Dying Law Will Claim Unintended Victims"

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/will-johnston/assisted-dying_b_12168266.html

Dr. Will Johnston, Family Physician in Vancouver B.C. explains, "The Carter decision to allow assisted suicide and euthanasia claimed that Canada could

avoid abuses through careful guidelines and screening. Medically facilitated elder abuse by greedy relatives and medicalized suicide for the depressed—a grim reality where this practice is legal—were supposed to be avoidable, said the judge, because of a superior medical culture in Canada. The abuses of Belgium? Not for us.” However, he points out, “Experience proves otherwise.”

Part II: Statements of professional medical associations against the legalization of assisted suicide.

1. American Academy of Neurology

https://www.aan.com/uploadedFiles/Website_Library_Assets/Documents/6.Public_Policy/1.Stay_Informed/2.Position_Statements/3.PDFs_of_all_Position_Statements/assist.pdf

2. American College of Medical Quality

<http://www.acmq.org/policies/policy34.pdf>

3. American College of Physicians

https://www.acponline.org/system/files/documents/running_practice/ethics/issuess/policy/pa_suicide.pdf [Please copy and paste this link into browser]

4. American Medical Association

<https://www.ama-assn.org/sites/default/files/media-browser/code-of-medical-ethics-chapter-5.pdf> ... and scroll to the end: see 5.8

5. American Nurses Association

<http://www.nursingworld.org/euthanasiaanddying>

6. National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization

http://www.nhpco.org/sites/default/files/public/PAS_Resolution_Commentary.pdf

7. The American Medical Directors Association has taken a position against assisted suicide laws.

8. The American Society of Medical Ethics has taken a position against assisted suicide laws.