

Colorado End of Life Options Act
Colorado House Judiciary Committee
February 4, 2016

Chairman Kagan and members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for granting me this opportunity to speak to you in support of House Bill 16-1054, the Colorado End of Life Options Act.

My name is Jerry Gilbert, I live in Aurora, CO, and I am a retired clinical psychologist.

This Act addresses the need to give terminally ill patients the option to decide for themselves when, where, and how to end their lives. No one has the ability to choose whether or when to be born. But in special cases, terminally ill patients should have the clinical options of whether or when to die.

For a terminally ill patient, the condition is untreatable, and death is unpreventable. Therefore, providing aid, under professional and structured guidelines, to the terminally ill patient who chooses to hasten death, is not assisting in suicide and it is justified.

In contrast, for a person who is considering suicide, the condition is treatable, and death is preventable. Therefore, assisting someone to commit suicide is unjustified. The differences in circumstances are substantial and crucial.

As a clinician, I am fully aware of the importance of patients making sound, rational, decisions that affect their lives. Assessing cognition and reasoning ability is a well-established clinical skill that is routinely used to obtain consent in medicine and mental health services. This Act requires that physicians and psychologists ensure that the terminally ill patient choosing aid in dying, is making a sound and rational decision, and is free from coercion.

As a clinician, I am committed to providing patients with all the ethical options for dealing with life-altering events. This Act requires that the terminally ill patient, choosing to hasten inevitable death, is made fully aware of all the end-of-life options.

No law is perfect, and no law satisfies everyone. But, this bill serves an essential need and is well reasoned; and it is time for Colorado to join those states that have already passed similar and successful laws.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

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