

**STATEMENT OF JOAN E. T. STEARNS OF HENDERSON, CO, IN SUPPORT OF SB16-025**

2-3-2016

My name is Joan Stearns. I live in Henderson, Colorado, and I am here in support of SB16-025.

I have systemic lupus erythematosus. I am presently in remission, but relapse could mean organ failure. If I am terminally ill from lupus or from anything else, I want the freedom to opt for medical aid-in-dying. I want the right to a gentle death, and I want it here in my own state!

If I am terminally ill, I will not be suicidal. I will be a dying person who wants to live. The Act does not countenance assisted suicide: suicidal people want to die. Rather than view the bill as providing for assisted suicide, we should view it as affording a peaceful death to a person who is already dying.

A YES vote by this Committee does not constitute an endorsement of aid-in-dying. It constitutes, rather, a vote for *freedom of choice* to adult, mentally capable Colorado residents who are terminally ill and within six months of death. Even if you personally oppose aid-in-dying, vote YES to support my right to choose it!

The End-of-Life Options Act is non-partisan. It contains multiple safeguards to ensure voluntariness and to protect the vulnerable from coercion. In addition, the Act: permits anyone to rescind his request at any time; provides for the disposal of unused medication; allows medical personnel to decline participation; immunizes those in good faith compliance with it from criminal and civil actions; and requires the cause of death on the death certificate to be the underlying illness.

Far more than a majority of Coloradans support medical aid-in-dying. This important bill deserves debate by the full legislature and it should not be allowed to die in committee.

Please vote YES for freedom of choice and to allow the entire legislative body to consider the End-of-Life Options Act.

Thank-you.