

Submitter: Steven Wahls
On Behalf Of: Self
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1003

As a Board Certified Family Physician with over 40 years of experience, I have cared for many of my patients at the end of their lives. They all experienced compassion and dignity- though none of them expressed interest in medically assisted suicide. The Oregon "Death with Dignity" act was a non-issue. I realize there are a number of physicians who supplement their income from "assisting" with death; some with whom I have worked side by side and whose general patient care and respect I have found dubious. There is a small market for this "service", and a relatively limited number of physicians are willing to abdicate the Hippocratic oath to which many of us subscribe. I suspect that this bill is a further step toward normalizing this procedure.

There is no need to shorten the waiting time for assisted suicide. I have cared for many people with impulsive tendencies; it is well known that this is a risk factor for suicide. Shorting the waiting period to 48 hours from 15 days does nothing to empower the patient to make a better informed decision. It is highly unusual for a known medical problem to pose hazard of death within two days. Moods change over weeks, not days. In addition, families have a right to continue to be involved in the care of their loved ones- and not have the chance to expedite the end of a person's life- perhaps creating undue pressure to that end.

Expanding the prescribing clinician from "Attending physician" to "Prescribing provider" weakens the long term relationship needed to understand a patient, and to clarify the physical and emotional reasons for a request for assisted suicide. I have worked around many excellent APPs, but frequently these do not have the complexity of training or longitudinal involvement that our patients deserve. This bill moves a given service from the environment of medical care to a commodity- perhaps justifying the term "provider".

Please reject SB1003. Thank you for your consideration.

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