

Submitter: Susan Mates  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1003

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee

I strongly urge you to consider this bill to modify provisions of the Oregon Death With Dignity Act. We need to remove hurdles to medically assisted suicide.

The changes in the bill are reasonable, and still do not address enough to alleviate the suffering of those facing terrible end of life situations. I hold to the belief that mentally competent adults who suffer from a terminal illness, intractable physical pain, chronic or progressive physical disabilities, or who face loss of autonomy and selfhood through dementia, have a basic human right to choose to end their lives when they judge their quality of life to be unacceptable.

As someone who has lived a large part of my life in rural parts of Oregon, I know that finding two doctors to sign off on medically assisted suicide in regions where only physician assistants or nurse practitioners are available - at best - can make the provisions of the Death With Dignity Act heartbreakingly inaccessible to many.

Circumstances at the end of life can turn rapidly. Reducing the waiting period after patients ask for lethal doses of medication from 15 days to two days could mean nearly two weeks of alleviation from unbearable suffering.

Many other countries support measures far beyond these. We need to also show compassion for individuals and families facing difficult moments so that they may make the choices best for them, without resorting to riskier, less sure, more distressing methods - or worse, to continue suffering.

Oregon's law allows people to make a clearly conscious choice for a "better exit" at the end of life, to die with loved ones present and in a peaceful way. The fears voiced 28 years ago concerning this act have not been shown to be an issue. The many individuals who have voiced their opposition do not need to utilize it. But they should not be allowed to stand in the way of those for whom it would bring relief and peace to make their own choices.

I hope that my comments are not too late and that a decision has not already been made on this issue. It seems to have been poorly publicized, and I believe that if more Oregonians had known of this hearing and these proposed changes, you would have received many more messages of support.

Please consider what is the best policy for all of Oregon, not what reflects the values of a few vocal citizens. I hope you will take the next steps to make this bill a reality.

Sincerely,  
Susan Mates