

Dear Senators,

I am writing in regard to the proposed bill, SB 1003. In this bill, the providers who could implement assisted suicide would be widened. It also shortens the waiting time to just 7 days. In some cases, the lethal drugs can be administered in just 48 hours.

These changes are extremely concerning. But, even more concerning, health care facilities will be forced to disclose in writing the availability of assisted suicide before a patient is admitted. This forces health care providers including admission clerks, doctors, nurses and possibly other workers to provide this information. This is tantamount to a referral for death. This violates the conscience of doctors like me who value human life even at its end. My role as a doctor is to preserve life and make remaining life valuable and pain-free—not end it.

Such a requirement is a conscience freedoms violation. Such freedoms have been held up by courts again and again. I will not make such a referral for death with these vulnerable patients and I should not be forced to do so.

These patients are very vulnerable and often alone. They frequently have feelings of low self-worth and can easily feel coerced into ‘choosing’ death. When I was practicing as a general surgeon in Salem, Oregon, I had to do my own hospice care during the first years of my practice. I managed multiple hospice patients as there were no doctors employed by the hospice at that time. So, I was deeply involved in the care of these patients. My universal experience was that patients always chose life if their pain could be controlled.

Suggesting to patients that they end their lives gives them the message that they are not worthy of living. Many are depressed and would feel forced to end their lives. And making all health care providers potentially be the instrument of them making such choices can easily provide a ‘cop-out’ for the provider to not give adequate symptom control—pain, depression or any other palliative intervention. Doctors of faith, such as I am, will not obey such a law and should not be asked to do so.

I urge you to not allow this bill to go forward. It is dangerous both to patients and their doctors.