

Dear Representative Drummond:

I am submitting my strong support of House Bill 54, An Act relating to the voluntary termination of life by terminally ill individuals.

This topic is of great personal interest to me. We lost my Mom to breast cancer about six years ago and it was an excruciatingly painful and long ending for her. My mother was an active, loving and moral individual and was the main stay of our family. When originally diagnosed with breast cancer she tackled the chemo and radiation treatment head on and always continued to show strength to those around her. She went into remission for eight years and continued to enjoy life, but then the cancer came back and attacked her bones. A short bout of chemo ultimately could not control, let alone diminish the cancer – treatment stopped. She endured months of pain, many silently from us, while getting things in order often quietly not asking help of her family – just another demonstration of her strength and determination. Her last few months of life were with family at home, care of her doctor and hospice. However, each hour she battled the hourly pain and debilitation of the terminal disease and the last few weeks were more than she should have had to endure. While pain killer medication dosages were outlined and administered on a schedule; you could tell from her actions they were not sufficing and she still suffered. Over her last few weeks of life it was so difficult to see how much she hurt, how she was uncomfortably and wasting away, usually such a strong and vibrant person – these are weeks she may have chosen to avoid if Alaska had a death with dignity law on the books.

Before her second round of cancer we talked periodically about choices and that Washington and Oregon had death with dignity laws to allow terminally ill to make their own decisions about their life ending, but Juneau is where home is. For me, being at risk of breast cancer, I would want the ability to make my personal choice in terms of time and method of death if terminally ill from this very invasive and painful disease. I have lived in Alaska for over 45 years, this is the first piece of legislation I have felt so personally strong about.

I realize that there are some major issues to be addressed by the legislature this session, however I hope that this bill will advance for committee hearings. I commend you for proposing this legislation and offer my support in any way I can. I am copying my local legislative delegation as well to share my support for this legislation.

Sincerely,

Laura Baker



March 2, 2017

Dear Members of the Health and Social Services Committee,

HB54, "An Act relating to the voluntary termination of life by terminally ill individual" allows freedom of choice - compassionate choice. I want to choose for myself when, toward the end of my life, my quality of life is unbearable. Please allow me that dignity by voting in favor of the bill.

Respectfully yours,

Joyanne Bloom



Dear Chair Spohnholz,

I am writing to support House Bill 54 - "An Act relating to the voluntary termination of life by terminally ill individuals; and providing for an effective date."

A majority of US voters support the choice offered by bills like this. In states where it is an authorized medical practice, it is not subject to abuse. It also provides great peace of mind to terminally ill adults as they approach life's end.

Aid in dying is not a choice of death over life. It is an option for those who are dying that spares them unbearable suffering and offers a controlled and peaceful ending. All dying people deserve that option, and the tremendous peace of mind that comes with it.

Please give this bill a fair hearing.

Thanks

--

Ron Johnson
Professor Emeritus
Mechanical and Environmental Engineering
Univ of Alaska Fairbanks



Jan 17, 2017

Dear Representative Drummond,

I am writing to thank you for introducing House Bill 54 – “An Act relating to the voluntary termination of life by terminally ill individuals and providing for an effective date.”

Like 70 percent of people in this country, I believe that our rights and freedoms are ours to exercise until we take our last breath, and having a terminal illness doesn't change that. I am calling on you as my elected representative to guarantee those rights for me.

I support this bill and the freedom it provides. The record shows that in states where it is an authorized medical practice, aid in dying works as intended, and is not subject to abuse. It also provides great peace of mind to terminally ill adults as they approach life's end.

Sincerely,
Marydith, age 80, a cancer survivor

Marydith Beeman

[REDACTED]

Serious consideration of the "Right to Die" bill would be appreciated. Too many people spend the last weeks or more of life in pain/impoverishment/despair when no relief/reversal is possible. At this point, suicide is the answer for many, when Dr. assisted effort would be appreciated and humane.

Contact Info:
Valerie Luczak

[REDACTED]

Dear Representative Drummond:

I am submitting my strong support of House Bill 54, An Act relating to the voluntary termination of life by terminally ill individuals.

This topic is of great personal interest to me. We lost my Mom last year, 2016 and it was an excruciatingly painful ending for her. After a mishap of medications while she was being treated for a heart condition that left her wheelchair bound, my mother was in a home for nearly 7 years. My mother was a fun-loving individual who enjoyed being out and about at all times.

Towards the end of my mother's life, she had lost most of her sight and some of her cognizance. She had severe arthritis as well as other bone deformities which caused her severe pain. She was continually asked to define her pain on a medical scale of 1-10 (10 being the worst) and always said it was between an 8-9. Although she needed medical operations, due to her age and underlying conditions, no physician in Juneau or Anchorage would operate on her for fear that she would die on the table. She wanted to die, and in her last month, my mother asked not only her good friends to end her life but also her family. That being said, it was extremely hard to explain to a loved one that it was not possible in this State to give her what she wanted most of all, peace, comfort and most importantly no more pain.

She endured years of pain, each day she battled the hourly pain and debilitation of her body and the last few weeks were more than she should have had to endure. When her physician believed she only had no more than a couple of weeks to live, she was placed on a what is called a "comfort care plan". By the good graces of that physician, strong pain medication was administered on an as needed basis for pain; but you could tell from my mother's actions that the medication was not sufficing and she still suffered greatly. It was extremely difficult to watch and see how much she hurt. She was uncomfortable and wasting away. How every day she begged me to "put her out of her misery" before she couldn't take the pain anymore. This was the time that she and I prayed that Alaska would have had a death with dignity law on our books like other states have.

I have lived in Alaska since 1963. I have talked to many of our elderly who were or are currently in the homes where they are cared for and the "one thing that they ask for is to be able to die with their dignity in place". This one piece of legislation is so significant I had to write to you to express how personally important it is.

I realize that during this legislature session there are many other important issues to address. However, this bill is so significant to many, my hope and the hope of others who have been through this, is that this bill will advance for committee hearings. I personally commend you for proposing this legislation and offer my support in any way I can.

Sincerely,

Susan Mitten



March 22, 2017

I am writing in support of HB 54 – “An Act relating to the voluntary termination of life by terminally ill individuals.”

I hope you never have to watch a loved one suffer through a debilitating, terminal illness. It is a helpless feeling. HB 54 will allow terminally ill patients to ease their suffering and hasten an inevitable death. It preserves dignity and a person's right to live, and die, on their own terms according to their own beliefs.

Death is a natural part of life. Providing dignity, control and peace of mind during a patient's final days with family and loved ones places a much greater focus on a person's life than on the often painful and agonizing process of dying.

Please hear HB 54 and vote to move it out of committee.

Thank you,

Russ McDougal

Dear Representative Drummond,

I support HB 54. I grew up in Oregon and moved to Alaska 40 years ago. My father was in general practice medicine in Oregon when I was growing up. He retired to Southern California but after he had a stroke my family brought him back to Oregon because of their death with dignity law. I totally support people's right to choose death with dignity.

Best Regards,

Pam Woolcott
Juneau, AK 99801

March 19, 2017

Dear Representative Drummond,

Thank you for introducing House Bill 54 – “An Act relating to the voluntary termination of life by terminally ill individuals and providing for an effective date.”

As a health woman, I can only imagine what it might be like to contemplate and then act to hasten my own death. Nevertheless, I fervently want that right: the power over one’s body. Not unlike a woman’s right to choose her reproduction, a person’s right to assistance in dying, under the care of a medical professional, is critical to our American freedoms.

Citizens of Alaska, the Last Frontier, shouldn’t have to resort to other ghastly resources to hasten an inevitable death. Having the aid of a doctor, who won’t lose her privileges to practice, is humane. In states where it is an authorized medical practice, aid in dying works as intended, and is not subject to abuse.

Let’s be leaders in the nation, along with Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, California, Vermont, the District of Columbia, and Colorado, to allow terminally ill citizens to make their own choices over how to spend their last months without the agony of having to die a “natural” death with pain and suffering.

Thank you for bringing HB54 to the Alaska State Legislature. I admire your courage and hope your colleagues will vote for this bill and bring peace of mind to all Alaskans.

Sincerely,
Amy Volz
Sitka, AK 99835

I am writing in support of HB54.

My spouse of 30 years, a medical provider herself, was diagnosed with Stage 4 Melanoma in May 2015. We were advised on the first day of this diagnosis that hers was a terminal illness. Following 8 weeks of hospitalization, Leslie was released to hospice care in our home. I witnessed nearly every moment of tremendous and unnecessary psychological pain and suffering as she simply waited to die over the next 8 weeks. Leslie died at home on September 15, 2015.

Leslie strongly supported voluntary termination of life by the terminally ill - both as a health care provider, and as a terminally ill patient. HB54 is a well-reasoned bill that addresses both a patient's right of self-determination, and a physician's right not to participate in this practice. The bill's statutory safeguards address every rational objection to voluntary termination of life, with no compulsory action for patient or physician. The foreseeable religious objections have no place in a system of laws which fundamentally prohibit discrimination based upon religion.

Respectfully,
Michael Haukedalen