

PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE

Massachusetts Ballot Petition Question #2
November 6, 2012

Ballot Question #2

“Prescribing Medication to End Life”

This proposed law would allow a physician licensed in Massachusetts to prescribe medication, at a terminally ill patient's request, to end that patient's life.

- ▣ If passed by a majority of voters, physician assisted suicide would become legal in MA on January 1, 2013.
- ▣ No additional legislative or other approval would be necessary.

Key Points of Ballot Question #2

- ▣ Adult resident of MA (18 or older)
- ▣ Medically capable of making and communicating health care decisions
- ▣ Diagnosis by attending and consulting physician as having incurable, irreversible disease that within reasonable medical judgment will cause death within 6 months.

How is a Request Made?

- ▣ Oral Request
- ▣ Written Request

Oral Request

- ▣ Direct Request-the patient makes the request
- ▣ Indirect Request- a person familiar with the patient's manner of communicating makes request

Time Frame of Request

- ▣ Oral request is made twice
- ▣ Minimum of 15 days apart

Consent Form

- ▣ Written consent is signed
- ▣ Presence of two witnesses

Criteria for Witnesses

One of whom is not:

- a relative
- a beneficiary of the patient's estate
- an owner, operator, or employee of a health care facility where the patient receives treatment or lives.

Prescription

- ▣ A prescription for a medication that the patient may self administer to end his or her life is written
- ▣ 48 hour waiting period before medication is dispensed

Medication

Dispensed to:

- Patient
- Physician
- Agent of Patient

Ingestion of Medication

- ▣ Self-Administered by patient at a time of their choosing
- ▣ May take up to three hours or longer for death to occur

Flaws in Initiative Petition

- ▣ No requirement for psychiatric evaluation
- ▣ Patients who request suicide are often suffering from depression or other mental illness
- ▣ There is no specific criteria for evaluating mental capacity

- ▣ Diagnosis of terminal illness with prognosis of likely death within 6 months
- ▣ There is no differentiation between with treatment or without
- ▣ Predictions of life expectancy are very often inaccurate

Professional Organizations Opposed to Physician Assisted Suicide

- Hospice and Palliative Care Federation of Massachusetts
- Massachusetts Medical Society
- Doctors Against Suicide
- Mass Osteopathic Society
- American Medical Association
- American College of Physicians

- ▣ American Nurses Association
- ▣ National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization
- ▣ American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today
- ▣ Physicians for Compassionate Care Education Foundation
- ▣ American Academy of Neurology

- ▣ Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
- ▣ National Council on Disability
- ▣ National Spinal Cord Injury Association
- ▣ Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH)
- ▣ American College of Medical Quality
- ▣ American Medical Directors Association

Those At End of Life Need

- ▣ Hospice and palliative care
- ▣ Emotional support for patient and family
- ▣ Access to effective pain management
- ▣ Education on end of life issues

Our Responsibility

- ▣ Know the facts about ballot question #2
- ▣ Understand Church teaching on end of life issues; respect of life from conception to natural death
- ▣ Educate others

Vote No on Question #2!

“When freedom is made absolute in an individualistic way, it is emptied of its original content, and its very meaning and dignity are contradicted.”

-Blessed John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*

For more information go to :

<http://www.stopassisted suicide.org>