

# MAINE RIGHT TO LIFE COMMITTEE

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Testimony in Opposition of LD 1270, *An Act for Patient-directed Care at the End of Life*  
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**Maine Right to Life Committee**

Hello, Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine and honored Committee members. My name is Teresa McCann-Tumidajski. I am Executive Director of Maine Right to Life Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with testimony in opposition of LD 1270, *An Act for Patient-directed Care at the End of Life*.

Maine Right to Life seeks to uphold the inherent worth and dignity of all persons at all stages of development, especially our most vulnerable. Passage of this bill would place our elderly, terminally ill, and disabled at grave risk. Their lives could be deemed "less valuable" than others. For them, the so-called "right to die" could quickly become the "duty to die." We believe this bill is very misleading and filled with dangerous loopholes that if enacted, would legalize physician assisted suicide in Maine.

Make no mistake. When human life is readily expendable in one area, all lives are in jeopardy.

Maine's suicide rate is already higher than the national average. Seven times more people die from suicide than homicide in Maine. Additionally, Maine is the grayest state in our nation. If enacted, this bill could have grave, unintended consequences by making assisted suicide the only affordable "health care" option for many Mainers. LD 1270 purports the illusion of choice. However, informing the patient of a range of treatment options does not mean the patient will have the ability to access all treatment options. Patients may find their insurance will not cover all the 'feasible alternatives' their doctors informed them about, but it will cover doctor-prescribed death. You may recall media reports out of Oregon, where a woman with breast cancer was denied chemotherapy, but offered physician assisted suicide instead. The last to receive medical treatment could become the first to receive physician assisted suicide.

There is no information in LD 1270 about requirements to prove residency. Someone could claim to be a resident and no proof of the claim is required. So people from across the nation could come into Maine to commit suicide. Additionally, there is no provision for disposal of the lethal barbiturate prescription.

We would be better served to focus on true compassionate care for our vulnerable populations with programs such as Hospice, palliative care, POLST, Advance Directives, prevention of elder abuse, and proactive programs which focus on improving pain management and the quality of life-- such as proposed earlier today with LD 782, *An Act to Improve the Quality of Life of Persons with Severe Illnesses*.

Maine citizens deserve safe, ethical, and sound public policy which is based in common sense and compassion. Good public policy requires we consider the long term effects on all people; not just the short term effects on a few people. For example, what message would passage of LD 1270 send our teens, already at risk of suicide, at a vulnerable time in their lives---that some suicide is 'ok', while other suicide is not? Please don't nullify the effects of Maine's Teen Suicide Prevention bill, enacted two years ago.

All Maine citizens deserve our best care and protections at all stages of life. Please vote "ought not pass."