



STATE OF DELAWARE  
**STATE COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**  
Margaret M. O'Neill Bldg., Suite 1, Room 311  
410 Federal Street  
Dover, Delaware 19901  
302-739-3621

The Honorable John Carney  
Governor

John McNeal  
SCPD Director

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 14, 2024

TO: Governor John Carney  
All Members of the Delaware State Senate  
and House of Representatives

FROM: Susannah Eaton-Ryan, Chairperson  
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Eaton-Ryan".

RE: **Medically Assisted Suicide Legislation (HB 140)**

Honorable Members of the General Assembly,

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities' (SCPD) opposes the legalization of medical assisted suicide legislation often described as "medical aid in dying", "death with dignity", "end of life options" or any other actions. SCPD believes that it may be a first step towards expanding the authorized involuntary termination of life of individuals with disabilities and significant health impairments by guardians, third parties, government.

In addition, the healthcare system is largely profit driven creating an increasing environment for cost containment. In a profit driven healthcare system and environment of cost containment, the SCPD believes that there is a clear danger that individuals with significant disabilities will not be advised of other options; instead we believe there is a danger that the health care system would steer individuals to the least expensive options rather than the supports individuals may need.

The SCPD believes that such legislation also raises the following questions and concerns:

- The importance of palliative medicine and medical advancements in relieving pain.
- The danger that clinical depression plays in decision-making by those with a terminal illness.
- The detrimental effects such a law will have on Delaware's suicide prevention efforts.
- The risk of coercion and abuse of our most vulnerable Delaware citizens before and after a lethal prescription is written.
- The dangerous societal implications for persons who are isolated, older, poor, chronically ill or have disabilities.
- The lack of medical or government oversight after the lethal drugs is prescribed.
- The risks of mistaken diagnoses and prognoses.
- The ethical and moral impact on the medical profession.

Recommendations:

1. Medical and social work professionals should be teaching terminally ill patients and their families about options other than suicide. Such medical interventions as hospice, palliative care, and pain management have been shown to provide comfort while the individual is dying. In addition, these services are typically covered by medical insurances.
2. Groups such as Not Dead Yet, the National Council On Independent Living, ADAPT, and Disability Rights An Educational Defense Fund need to provide medical professionals information such as disability etiquette and disability rights, and demonstrate that individuals can have a quality life despite any disabling conditions.
3. Local Centers for Independent Living need to work on individual and systemic advocacy to assure quality of life issues are valued. These Centers need to work with the individual with a disability and his/her family on how to identify supports needed so the individual and the family can have a quality life that is appropriate for him/her.
4. Groups such as the National Association of Nurses, and several medical schools oppose assisted suicide as well. Disability advocacy organizations and

nonprofits need to work with these groups to demand that assisted suicide laws do not get passed.

We understand the sensitivity of this issue, but assisted suicide has far-reaching implications and outcomes in which life and death are literally at stake. The SCPD would prefer to see the concentration of our legislative process focusing on supports that make suicide by any means unimaginable. Such supports could provide a focus on hope for the infinite possibilities of tomorrow, rather than the lost hope to a “today” that those who choose suicide will never get back.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susannah Eaton-Ryan, Chairperson  
State Council for Persons with Disabilities