



Courtesy of Calvary Hospital

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# Help Stop Assisted Suicide

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Legislation has been introduced in New York State that would authorize assisted suicide by allowing doctors to legally prescribe a deadly dose of pills at the request of a patient with a terminal diagnosis. While proponents may call it “death with dignity” or “aid in dying,” in reality these proposals would authorize the direct and intentional taking of human life.

Catholic teaching holds that assisted suicide is gravely immoral, both for the patient who is assisted and any persons who assist. It violates the sacred value of human lives, particularly those who are vulnerable due to illness, age or disability.

As Christians, we are called to reach out in love and compassion to persons who are ill and suffering. Legalizing assisted suicide means abandoning those persons who are most in need of our assistance, support, and mercy.

Public policies regarding the end of life should focus on alleviating suffering for those who are dying, through increased access to quality palliative care.

There are alternatives to assisted suicide. We must do all we can to reduce suffering and promote the loving option of palliative medicine and hospice care.

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*Palliative care is an expression of the truly human attitude of taking care of one another, especially those who suffer. It is a testimony that the human person is always precious, even if marked by illness or old age. **Pope Francis, March 2015***

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# Know *the* Facts

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The proposal to legalize doctor-assisted suicide in New York State contains fatal flaws. It allows patients to fill a physician's prescription for a lethal dose of medication, and then ingest those pills at home, with no oversight by a doctor or nurse, no safeguards, and no accountability. What if a child got his hands on those pills first? Or what if the patient later changed her mind and decided not to take the pills? Who would know if someone else decided to trick or coerce the patient into taking the pills?

Nothing in the bill requires that patients be counseled or screened for clinical depression before they are handed a lethal prescription. Yet mental health professionals know that a large number of suicides could be prevented with the right therapeutic intervention. New York State recognizes suicide as a critical public health concern, and works to prevent it. Government should not reverse course now and send the message that some suicides are acceptable.

## LEARN MORE

The New York State Catholic Conference is working in an informal alliance with many other organizations to defeat this dangerous proposal.

**Visit: [www.NoAssistedSuicideNY.org](http://www.NoAssistedSuicideNY.org)**

Read the New York legislation and find the resources to fight it.

*"People who request death are vulnerable. They need care and protection."*

**To Live Each Day with Dignity**  
**U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops**  
**July 2011**

## TAKE ACTION

Visit the New York State Catholic Conference website  
**[www.nyscatholic.org](http://www.nyscatholic.org)**

Click the "Take Action" button to:

- 1** Join the **Catholic Action Network** and receive our important email alerts.
- 2** Send a message to your lawmakers simply and efficiently, urging them to oppose assisted suicide.
- 3** Easily send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to educate others in your community about this issue.

Physicians are healers and their profession is guided by the principle "first, do no harm." The American Medical Association stands firmly against doctor-assisted suicide.

Because human life is precious, Church teaching requires that we accept ordinary medical treatments, those that offer a reasonable hope of benefit without excessive burden. But it does not require that we suffer an agonizingly long and painful death. On the contrary: overly burdensome treatments that provide little or no benefit to patients are not morally required.

See what the New York State Bishops say about this, and about health care proxies, in their statement ***Now and at the Hour of Our Death*** at **[www.CatholicEndofLife.org](http://www.CatholicEndofLife.org)**.

