

Is Assisted Suicide Coming to Michigan?



Physician-assisted suicide—or “Death with Dignity” (a euphemism preferred by its proponents)—is a threat in our state yet again. In December of 2023, a package of bills (SB 678-681) was introduced in the Michigan State Senate to legalize the dangerous practice of allowing doctors to prescribe lethal doses of drugs to their patients for the purpose of committing suicide.

Is this the first-time “Death with Dignity” advocates have tried to legalize physician-assisted suicide in Michigan?

No. In 1998, advocates of physician-assisted suicide (PAS) initiated a ballot proposal to legalize the practice in the state. Closely aligned with Dr. Jack Kevorkian, the proposal was soundly defeated. 71% of Michigan voters said no on Proposal B at the ballot box. The Michigan Legislature clarified state law to better protect vulnerable elderly and infirm patients by passing a prohibition on the practice of PAS.

What do doctors think about physician-assisted suicide?

The practice remains outside the realm of accepted health care. In 2023, the American Medical Association (AMA) voted to maintain their position against physician-assisted suicide. The Michigan State Medical Society (MSMS) also remains opposed to the dangerous practice: “Instead of participating in assisted suicide, physicians must aggressively respond to the needs of patients at the end of life. Patients should not be abandoned once it is determined that cure is impossible.”

Is physician-assisted suicide legal in other states?

Ten states and the District of Columbia have legalized physician-assisted suicide. Those states have seen promised safeguards and guidelines against abuse quickly stripped away. In Canada, support for euthanasia and assisted suicide have led to a preference for a cheap death over more expensive, yet proper care. In one high-profile example, a disabled veteran attempting to procure a chair lift for her home was instead offered physician-assisted suicide through the country’s health care system.

How does physician-assisted suicide threaten patients’ rights?

By looking at states and countries that have legalized the practice, we can already see the slippery slope is real and tragic. Legalizing physician-assisted suicide will restrict patients’ already limited ability to access critical care in the midst of rising healthcare costs. Insurance companies scale back coverage for expensive care and procedures for illnesses that are chronic and not even terminal. Physician-assisted suicide puts those experiencing temporary depression or struggling with mental illness at risk, rather than treating the illness.

Does physician-assisted suicide pose a significant threat to minorities?

A 2023 Kaiser Family Foundation survey on racism, discrimination, and health found that people of color already often experience discrimination when seeking medical care.¹ With the cheaper assisted suicide “option” available, those who already fight to overcome disparities in healthcare may be offered this option rather than costly care for complex medical conditions.

What does the disability community think about physician-assisted suicide?

Given the push to provide a lethal option to individuals with disabilities in virtually every place assisted suicide is legal, disability rights groups almost unilaterally oppose the practice of assisted suicide.

The risks are high. As a society, we must commit ourselves to caring for patients and easing suffering, not eliminating those who suffer.

Learn more at bettercaremi.org.



Reference

¹ <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/poll-finding/survey-on-racism-discrimination-and-health>