

A Better Way Forward

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

We share with you our deep concern and a shared commitment to being stewards of the gift of life and protecting vulnerable members of our society. Advocates for physician-assisted suicide (PAS) are persistent in asking the Legislature to legalize this dangerous practice. This bill has already passed out of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee.

We need every Catholic to contact their legislators and tell them to create policies that improve healthcare throughout life's journey, not those like PAS that hasten death. As a faithful Catholic, your ongoing dedication to protecting and promoting the sanctity of life will make an impact at the Capitol.

The Catholic Church affirms the intrinsic value and dignity of every human life from conception to natural death. Our faith calls us to protect and care for the most vulnerable among us, especially those who are disabled, facing illness, suffering, or facing end-of-life decisions. Our concern is that PAS will endanger the lives and healthcare choices of the poor, disabled, vulnerable, and, eventually, the rest of us. When care is expensive, and PAS is cheap, which do we think will ultimately prevail?



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Specifically, physician-assisted suicide is a practice that allows individuals to request and receive lethal drugs from a doctor that will enable the individual to end his or her life. Our opposition to the legalization of PAS is rooted in several fundamental ethical and moral concerns:

Inviolability of Human Life: Our faith teaches us that life is a gift from God and that we are stewards, not owners, of our lives. The Catechism states that "whatever its motives and means, direct euthanasia consists in putting an end to the lives of handicapped, sick or dying persons...is morally unacceptable" (CCC, 2277).

Ethical Concerns: The involvement of medical professionals in hastening death raises serious ethical concerns and would erode trust in the medical community. It lacks critical safeguards that could enable elder abuse. And it blurs the line between healing and causing harm. Is this what doctors are for?

Alternative Care: We believe that compassionate and comprehensive palliative care and pain management to address the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of those with serious illnesses should be promoted instead of PAS. How will the legalization of PAS impact already existing disparities in our healthcare system or disincentivize the creation of better care mechanisms?

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People have the right to receive medical care as well as refuse treatment when it constitutes a burden or will have limited benefit. **We have real choices at the end of life, as well as effective ways of preventing suffering, such as palliative care.** What we need are truly compassionate policies that help people get the care they seek, not those that coerce them into taking a prescription bottle of pills to end their life.

Concerns about PAS span the political and religious spectrum, and it is not only Catholics who are opposed. **In fact, the Minnesota Catholic Conference is part of an alliance of more than 50 organizations committed to better care and opposing PAS called the Minnesota Alliance for Ethical Healthcare.** The members have very different perspectives on many issues, but they are all committed to opposing PAS as wrong for patients and wrong for our state.

We are grateful to collaborate with individuals of various faiths, the disability-rights community, mental health and medical professionals, veterans' organizations, lawmakers across the political spectrum, and every Minnesotan who shares our concerns regarding PAS.

We respectfully urge faithful Catholics to act in defense of life and for better care at the end of life for all Minnesotans. We ask that you visit www.EthicalCareMN.org and use the act button to send a message to your legislators expressing your opposition to assisted suicide.

You can also find resources by clicking on the "learn more" tab at EthicalCareMN.org. Please also visit mncatholic.org for information and resources related to end-of-life decisions and advance directives. Thank you for prayerfully considering our request.

Yours in Christ Jesus the Divine Physician.



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