

Organizations That Oppose Physician Assisted Suicide And What They Say About It



American Medical Association (> 200,000 Members)

“It is understandable, though tragic, that some patients in extreme duress—such as those suffering from a terminal, painful, debilitating illness—may come to decide that death is preferable to life. However, permitting physicians to engage in assisted suicide would ultimately cause more harm than good.” [2]

“Physician-assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician’s role as healer, would be difficult or impossible to control, and would pose serious societal risks.” [2]

American College of Physicians (152,000 members)

“ ‘The American College of Physicians acknowledges the range of views on, the depth of feelings about, and the complexity of the issue of physician-assisted suicide,’ said Jack Ende, MD, MACP, president, ACP. ‘But the focus at the end of life should be on efforts to prevent or ease suffering and on the often unaddressed needs of patients and families. As a society, we need to work to improve hospice and palliative care, including awareness and access.’ ” [3]

American Medical Directors Association (5500 Members)

“AMDA opposes any physician involvement in assisted suicide or active euthanasia of any person regardless of age. AMDA members recognize that we are entrusted with the care of people who are vulnerable in terms of physical frailty and cognitive impairment. Our position recognizes that physician involvement in assisted suicide or active euthanasia would erode the trust vital to the doctor/patient relationship.” [4]

American Nurses Association

“Nurses may not act with the sole intent of ending a patient’s life even though such action may be motivated by compassion, respect for patient autonomy and quality of life considerations.” [5]

Quick Facts on Opposition to PAS

- Opposition to PAS is Bipartisan[1]
- The largest professional medical organizations all oppose PAS
- The largest disability rights groups all oppose PAS
- In 2017 27 states defeated measures to legalize PAS [1]

Physicians for Compassionate Care Foundation

“Physicians for Compassionate Care oppose Physician Assisted Suicide because:

- Doctor assisted suicide undermines trust in the patient-physician relationship
- Doctor assisted suicide changes the role of the physician in society from the traditional role of healer to that of the executioner
- Doctor assisted suicide endangers the value that society places on life, especially for those who are most vulnerable and who are near the end of life.” [6]

National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities

“Too often people with disabilities and those with chronic debilitating illness are entrenched in a slippery slope of negative perceptions where their lives may not be valued and respected as every life should be. NOND believes that nurses are dedicated to provide compassionate care that respects the rights of patients but upholds the standards of our profession in the presence of chronic illness, disability and at the end of life. The solution to resolve illness is NOT for physicians to assist our patients to choose death. “[7]

National Hospice & Palliative Care Education Foundation

“When symptoms or circumstances become intolerable to a patient, effective therapies are now available to assure relief from almost all forms of distress during the terminal phase of an illness

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without purposefully hastening death as the means to that end.” [8]

“These considerations lead to the resolution that the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization does not support the legalization of physician assisted suicide.” [8]

National Council on Disability (Federal Agency)

“Current evidence indicates clearly that the interests of the few people who would benefit from legalizing physician-assisted suicide are heavily outweighed by the probability that any law, procedures, and standards that can be imposed to regulate physician-assisted suicide will be misapplied to unnecessarily end the lives of people with disabilities and entail an intolerable degree of intervention by legal and medical officials in such decisions.” [9]

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

“If an individual with disabilities feels that they have lost control in their lives, been devalued because of their impairments, and become a burden to others, the appropriate response from society is to support him or her, not to kill. Legalized medical killing based on disability should be rejected. People with disabilities are not better off dead, and society is not better off without us.” [10]

The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps

“No bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide applies to all citizens equally, but singles out individuals based on their health status in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The legalization of physician-assisted suicide give physicians the power to decide who will be given suicide prevention and who will receive suicide assistance and is, therefore, not based on individual choice and autonomy.” [11]

“Current trends in managed care and health care rationing threaten to diminish the availability of health care and related services needed by people with disabilities.” [11]

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

“The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) opposes the legalization of assisted suicide. AAPD fully supports the self-determination, competency, and the ability of people with disabilities to make decisions regarding all aspects of their lives. However, mistakes by health care professionals, widespread misinformation, coercion, and abuse limit the opportunity for people with disabilities to make informed and independent decisions. In addition, the legalization of assisted suicide devalues the lives of people with disabilities and would create a double standard in our society: it would mean providing suicide assistance to individuals with disabilities and health conditions, as opposed to the suicide prevention services that we provide to others.” [12]

“The proponents of physician assisted suicide laws like to assert that they support the right to what they call ‘death with dignity.’ What voters don’t often realize until later is that they are also giving insurance companies and physicians new rights too – the legal means to deny treatment. The romantic notion of assisted suicide as something individuals do at the end of life to make their death more comfortable becomes tainted because without the means to live, the ‘right-to-die’ becomes the dangerous default.” [13]

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

“When people are offered the option of suicide but not the option of affordable home care, they do not have any meaningful choice. People with significant disabilities due to illness should not have to die in order to have dignity. Instead, they need access to the things that help them make the most of their remaining time: quality palliative care, respectful in-

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home supports, counseling, and assistive technology to maximize autonomy. Let's focus on aid in living, not "aid in dying." [14]

National Council on Independent Living

"Our concern is social justice. If assisted suicide is legal, some people's lives will be ended without their consent, through mistakes and abuse. No safeguards have ever been enacted or even proposed, that can prevent this outcome, which can never be undone." [15]

Their 2017 Legislative and Advocacy Priorities Guide [15] provides multiple concerns with PAS related to:

- PAS as a healthcare cost containment tool
- Elder abuse

- Incorrect terminal Diagnoses
- Doctor-shopping
- Risk to people with depression and other psychiatric disabilities
- Financial and emotional pressures
- Insufficient oversight & data collection

The Arc

"We strongly oppose physician-assisted suicide for people with ID (Intellectual Disability) and believe it requires strong and absolute vigilance because laws and procedures, however strict, are not sufficient to protect people with ID from being coerced into ending their lives." [16]

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