

April 29, 2016

The Honorable Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould

I am writing you today to express my deep concerns with the legislation of Bill C-14 your government tabled on Thurs, Apr 14. It is imperative that clear conscience protections for health care workers and facilities be set in place. Many people, including myself, are opposed to this legislation. It is unconstitutional that people should be forced to participate against their deeply held convictions, either through referral or by doing the procedure. Further to this, I would then question if you would respect my decision and those who would choose palliative care to die a natural death.

If this bill is passed without amendments, Canada will be the only country in the world that does not provide legal protections for those who cannot participate in medical assistance in dying because of their moral convictions. There is no guarantee that the provinces will even pass legislation on this topic. Legislation must clearly spell out the protections provided by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, ensuring caregivers and their organizations will be protected from coercion and discrimination.

Why should physicians and health care workers be forced to put their careers on the line and open themselves to professional disciplinary action simply because they wish to follow their conscience? Why should the closure of facilities be allowed because they cannot provide medical assistance in dying? We need dedicated and caring health professionals we can put our trust in.

There should also be restrictions on who would be allowed to assist in aiding an assisted death. Under Bill C-14 anyone other than medical or nurse practitioners have no obligation to report the circumstances. This could also give protection to those who desire to encourage patients towards doctor-assisted death. This is an opportunity for abuse, even from family members.

This bill requires that the same two independent physicians or nurse practitioners who do the killing will also file the report after the procedure. This is not acceptable because if there is any incompetence or coercion, no one else would ever know about it.

I urge you to carefully discern my concerns as these deliberations are conducted. We need to respect and protect the vulnerable, mentally ill and depressed persons, as well as the conscience rights of Canadian physicians, other health care providers and objecting facilities.

Thank you

Cecile Hilts