

To: The Members of The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

I'm righting this from the perspective of someone with a diagnosis of a degenerative disease that itself is not fatal. The progression of this disease generally leads to extreme mobility and quality of life issues and increased pain which over time becomes extremely challenging to manage effectively. In the worst case I may be bedridden for years and probably require long term care. To date I have undergone 6 surgeries related to the disease and I'm told further surgeries will be required. Pain management is a part of my daily life.

- Bill C -14 as it is currently drafted causes me grave concern as those of us that don't have a terminal illness but suffer from debilitating, degenerative chronic conditions will be left behind and not have the option of choosing a medically assisted death. The draft legislation doesn't meet the minimum standard of the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in Carter by stating that to qualify a natural death must be reasonably for-seeable and I find this wording discriminatory and exclusionary.

- Advance consent must be included to ensure those with neuro-degenerative diseases like Dementia, Huntington's Parkinson's and mental illnesses like Schizophrenia have the option to arrange a medically assisted death and not be put in the position of choosing to prematurely take their life or as their disease progresses living for years with what they know will be a life filled with severe and intolerable suffering for themselves and their families.

- The draft legislation should address and define irremediable which the Carter decision stated was - "does not require the patient to undertake treatments that are not acceptable to the individual."

- With a mandatory 15 day waiting period there will be qualified individuals who have arranged for an assisted death but must languish possibly in pain for 15 days from the time of the approval until the actual scheduled assisted death. If they lose competency during the waiting period they would then not qualify for an assisted death. If a person must be competent at the time of the request for assisted death and the time of the assisted death there will be cases where an assisted death is scheduled but an individual loses competency due to a sudden catastrophic event like a stroke prior to the date and would then be ineligible. The impact on the families of the individuals who could become ineligible in these scenarios would be unimaginable.

To ensure the federal law is compliant with the Carter decision and The Charter of Rights and Freedom the language of Carter should be honoured and used in the federal legislation. Your consideration of my concerns would be appreciated and my hope is the appropriate changes will be made to what is currently an extremely restrictive and harsh draft bill.

Regards,

Lynne O'Brien