

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am writing you to express my concerns about the protection of the vulnerable as well as conscience rights for Canadian physicians who refuse to participate in controversial procedures like assisted suicide/euthanasia. While I am opposed to any form of assisted suicide I recognize that the government is currently preparing legislation on this issue as a result of the Supreme Court decision in the Carter case.

I am deeply concerned that the recommendations of the Commons-Senate Committee on Physician Assisted Death do not include adequate protection for physicians' conscience rights. I consider referral, even to a third party to be a type of participation. I am also troubled by the committee's recommendation that facilities should not be allowed to opt-out of providing physician assisted death in their facilities.

I am particularly distressed by recommendations that would provide access to assisted suicide for minors (by 2019), those who may be depressed, suffer from mental health issues or other vulnerable persons. Why are we not striving to provide greater support for these individuals as well as access to palliative care for all Canadians?

I believe that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects Canadian citizens against being forced by the state to act against their moral or religious convictions. There are undoubtedly other ways to ensure that the request of the patients who choose these procedures is respected. It is not necessary to make dedicated physicians put their careers on the line and open themselves to professional disciplinary action simply because they wish to follow their conscience or to force the closure of facilities that cannot provide physician assisted death. If these physicians are forced to leave the practice of medicine because of short-sighted policies, then patients like me will be unable to find the kind of doctor that I would like to have. I am also concerned that facilities which cannot morally provide physician assisted death will be forced to close should these recommendations be included in future legislation.

Please carefully consider my concerns as these policy deliberations are conducted. I request that whatever legislation is developed respects and protects the vulnerable as well as the conscience rights of Canadian physicians, other health care providers and objecting facilities.

Thank you.

Melanie D'Silva