

Dear Members of Parliament,

I am writing to you as an individual, a person who is living with chronic debilitating illness and who stands to lose something should Bill C-7 be passed.

I am a Lyme disease patient. Should this bill go through, I and many others like myself will find trusting the medical community even more difficult than it already is.

I contracted the disease at the age of 7 in Canada, and though I was sick for years, it wasn't until the age of 21 that I finally got a diagnosis when I traveled for medical care out of Canada. By that time, I had five vector diseases that were all stage 3-I could no longer walk, sleep, or care for myself. I was essentially handicapped, in a wheelchair, and on oxygen, at the age of 21. When severe episodes would happen, I could not move anything in my body, or speak in any way. As I am in the Lyme community, I have befriended many others with the same diseases as myself, and for a number of them, there are times in their lives when they too become completely helpless.

Paralysis, even when temporary, causes an individual to feel shamed, humbled, and very vulnerable. Compound that with the fact that the majority of us have been denied adequate medical care, ridiculed by caregivers and left to try to heal ourselves, the trust that once existed between patient and doctor has been eroded to a high degree. This already, being when we believed that each medical professional was operating under the bounds of the Hippocratic oath.

Knowing that those caring for you consider death to be a possible (or even favorable) treatment option, rips away any feelings of security and trust that may have been left.

Bill C-7 places an additional pressure on those who require assistance to kill themselves simply to save their caregivers work. I, myself, require almost constant care. After nine years of treatment, I have improved dramatically, and can often walk on my own, cook an occasional meal, and help around the home in small ways. I am by no means, however, independent. Even though my family tells me often that they consider it a joy to care for me, I am not blind to the hardships they face, financial and physical. Though I fight it, I often experience feelings of guilt and shame. I cannot imagine how those patients feel who have no family, or one that is less than supportive. Independence is something we all crave, although in our journeys from baby to senior not a single human is ever truly able to achieve it.

Already in my journey I have felt an enormous amount of pressure from medical professionals to take measures that are dangerous for my condition to save themselves time, frustration, or money. If you pass Bill C-7, you will add one more thing that I will feel as if I owe them should my case become too much of a bother-to simply remove my life and be done with it. I do not believe that that is fair to do to anyone, least of all those who are struggling, in pain, and already feeling guilty for situations that they did not cause. Removing the ten day waiting period and the two witnesses required only serves to exacerbate these emotions for myself and many others.

Aside from the pressure that vulnerable people may experience, there is the issue of prior consent being used should a patient be currently experiencing a lack of ability to communicate. As someone who has been paralyzed and periodically am rendered incapable of any kind of communication, I can tell you that

just because a patient does not appear able to make decisions and communicate, does not mean that they are not internally entirely present and aware. Additionally, the human condition is one that is surprising in that, at times of deepest pain, people often can find joy, hope, and meaning. The warmth of the sun, or a gentle touch...regardless of their capacity to be "normal", they may have found since signing the forms previously that they actually do not wish to die.

The same criticism exists for the removal of the 10 day waiting period. Who among us has not had a bad day in which we thought our life was over, and could not see how we would survive, yet over time, have gained perspective and found new purpose? To allow the request to be made and have the life taken within 24 hours is a grave danger to us all in our moments of weakness.

There are deep concerns that I carry regarding the amendment that makes it possible to request a medically assisted suicide when a natural death is not foreseeable. In an era in which we see hardship and unprecedented levels of depression and fear, changing this requirement of MAID sets all of us up for a landslide of tragedies.

By passing this law, you will be setting a precedent for the people of this nation who look to you for guidance. You, our leaders, will be teaching them that death is a tool, one that is reasonable and acceptable to be used to avoid pain in life. In doing so, the character and strength of this country will be deeply undermined...history is full of heroes who have faced impossible pain and insurmountable odds, which were the very things that defined their character. If you encourage those in your country to give up through the policies you create, there can be no surprise if they become shallow and without hope at the thought of adversity (which we are all, at the moment, surrounded by).

On the one hand, we all lament and have sorrow about how COVID-19 is raising suicide rates and insist that something must be done to fix it, while on the other pass a law that will enable countless others to choose that very thing. If you pass this law, I beg you first to ask yourself, will you be causing the people of this country to see death and suicide as the problem, or as the solution?

In conclusion, I ask that you do not make the requested amendments that Bill C-7 would bring. Please do not pass this bill...the nations resiliency, hope, and trust in their doctors and the medical profession, may not survive it if you do.