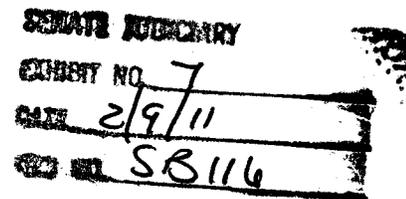


January 28, 2011

Senator Terry Murphy
Chairman Judiciary Committee
PO Box 200500
Helena MT 59620-0500



Re: SB 116

Dear Senator Murphy,

For the record, my name is Mary Ann Hayes. I am a resident of East Helena, MT.

I am speaking as a citizen, but the comments that follow spring from my 6-year -long professional experience as a Long Term Care Ombudsman.

Physician assisted suicide is a multi-faceted, and emotional issue. You and your fellow committee members face a very serious, and daunting task.

My purpose is not to expound on the issue, to a great extent. I simply wish to report an observation I have had, from time to time, when dealing with some family members, especially children or spouses, who face the prolonged illness of the loved one.

I have a worry. That is, in some cases, I have been privy to various comments that I find disturbing. The hope or prayer for a speedy death, so a parent or spouse would be relieved of suffering, is acceptable to my conscience. However, I have heard unsettling versions, from time to time, that may go something like this, "I hope mom doesn't linger too long, because if she doesn't go soon, there won't be anything left."

Yesterday I was visiting one of the Assisted Living facilities assigned to me. I was speaking to the owner/administrator about this issue. He stated that, recently, two children of one of his residents came to him and asked him if they could just turn off their mother's pace maker. He told them no, they could not do that.

Because of some of the not-so-honorable reasons that family members may ask a physician to step in, to accelerate the process, I believe that there is much room for abuse of the intent, especially with regard to elderly, and or, disabled citizens, particularly if there is property or money involved.

From experience, I also believe that pain control is the most pressing issue for the terminal patient. If pain is controlled, and that can happen in most cases, then there may be no other valid reason for accelerating a death, through the assistance of a doctor.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this point of view. Thank you, also, for your hard work on behalf of all Montana citizens.

Sincerely, Mary Ann Hayes

Mary Ann Hayes