SENATE JUDICIARY
EXHIBIT NO. 30
DATE 2/11/13
BILL NO. SB220

February 10, 2013

TO: Montana Senate Judiciary Committee
RE: Senate Bill 220

Dear Senators,

I am asking you to oppose SB 220.

I am a family practice physician in Great Falls, Montana who regularly sees patients from the very young to the elderly, including those who may have a terminal illness. Why should this bill be opposed?

1. Doctors are notoriously poor at estimating how long patients have left to live. A patient may commit suicide with legal approval through an error of diagnosis and prognosis.

2. Physician assisted suicide (PAS) is not a currently acceptable medical treatment nor is it taught in medical school.

3. It puts the public at risk by increasing the chance of elder abuse. There are many ways in which coercion and subtle pressure could be used.

4. It is unethical. As the AMA Cod of Medical Ethics states in Opinion 2.211, "...However, allowing physicians to participate in assisted suicide would cause more harm than good. Physician assisted suicide is fundamentally in compatible with the physician's role as healer, would be difficult or impossible to control, and would pose serious societal risks..."

5. Treatable depression is likely to be missed or undiagnosed

6. We clearly have legal, acceptable ways of treating patients' pain and suffering through palliative care, hospice, and palliative sedation. Intentional death is not needed.

7. Our rate of suicide is likely to increase with tacit approval of PAS, just as it has in Oregon since PAS was legally approved there.

Thank you for considering your opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Craig Treptow MD
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