EXHIBIT 17
DATE 2/10/15
HB 328

VOTE YES ON HB 328

My name is Mellda Freeman, Butte, Montana. I am for House Bill 328, which would prevent physician-assisted suicide in Montana.

What is the proper response to someone who wants to commit suicide – to kill himself or herself? We are not talking about general morality here.

In HB 328, we are talking about society and public policy protecting the general welfare – the good fortune, health, happiness and prosperity of Montanans: their well-being as citizens.

Making physician-assisted suicide illegal would make a strong statement in Montana about the quality and worth of humanity in general.

When we say that someone is killable – which is what we are saying when we point to certain categories of people in physician-assisted suicide – we are creating a profound inequality of life. If a terminally ill patient can be killed, then anyone who is suffering from back pain, depression, or chronic pain could have that same, so called, "right."

This is not an issue that is about terminal illness at all. In fact, the concept of terminal illness is a kind of slight-of-tongue to get people's minds off of what is really involved in this issue. The bottom line behind physician-assisted suicide is the premise that killing is an acceptable end to human suffering. It is not.

When society sees the elimination of suffering as the foundational purpose of society, this mindset will spread to other circles – including those who suffer from depression, mental illness and disabilities – giving them the green light to end their lives as well.

Even if physician-assisted suicide is initially legalized only for the terminally ill, history shows it will eventually broaden to include legal killing of those who are not terminally ill. We have seen this happen in Belgium and the Netherlands and elsewhere.

There are those who would argue physician-assisted suicide should be legalized – it should be up to individual choice if it doesn't violate anyone's rights or make the world a worse place.

But it does make for a far worse world because it is not a choice; it's the end of choice. We should say no to killing and yes to caring because the lives of people with sickness, disease and disability matter.

We are not stand alone creatures, or disconnected atoms, nor are we "absolutes"; rather, we are beings in relation. Protecting the general welfare requires the right of each individual to be harmoniously ordered to the greater good. Without this safe guard, those rights will end up being considered limitless and consequently will become a source of conflict and violence.

Please vote yes on HB 328 to make sure physician-assisted suicide is illegal in Montana.