

EXHIBIT 18

DATE 2/10/15

HB 328

Vote Yes on HB 328

Testimony of Cort Freeman, Butte, Montana

Ben Mattlin is a Harvard graduate, contributing editor at *Institutional Investor* and *Financial Advisor* magazines, National Public Radio commentator, and author. Writing in *The New York Times* on Oct. 31, 2012, he counts himself as a pro-choice liberal who ought to support physician-assisted suicide, but as a lifelong disabled person, he cannot. With plenty of room for abuse, Mattlin says, physician-assisted suicide is a bad idea. Coercion often is subtle and often misunderstood. Thus, I support HB 328.

Here's Mattlin: "My problem, ultimately, is this: I've lived so close to death for so long that I know how thin and porous the border between coercion and free choice is, how easy it is for someone to inadvertently influence you to feel devalued and hopeless — to pressure you ever so slightly but decidedly into being 'reasonable' to unburdening others, to 'letting go.'"

He goes on to say that, while the push for physician-assisted suicide comes from many who have seen a loved one suffer, supporters of it can't truly conceive of the many "subtle forces — invariably well-meaning, kindhearted, even gentle, yet as persuasive as a tsunami — that emerge when your physical autonomy is hopelessly compromised."

Mattlin was born with spinal muscular atrophy. He has never walked, stood, or had much use of his hands. Half of babies with this condition die within two years. Today, Mattlin, at 53, is a husband, father, journalist and author.

When a hospital blunder compromised his health further, doctors questioned whether his life was worth saving. Mattlin writes, "They didn't know about my family, my career, my aspirations." His wife rescued him.

From this he learned how easy it is to be perceived as someone whose quality of life is untenable and how this becomes one of many invisible forces of coercion. Others include, "that certain look of exhaustion in a loved one's eyes, or the way nurses or friends sigh in your presence while you are zoned out in a hospital bed."

Mattlin writes that this can cast a dangerous cloud of depression upon even the most cheery of optimists. He says, "advocates of Death with Dignity laws who say that patients themselves should decide whether to live or die are fantasizing. We are inexorably affected by our immediate environment. The deck is stacked."

Montana can do better with improved care. HB 328 can move Montana in this caring direction. Please vote yes on HB 328.