SENATE JUDICIARY
Exhibit No. 23
Date 2/10/15
Bill No. SB202

SB 202

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Bobbie Hafer and I reside in Dayton, Montana. I have one point to make in my urging you to vote against SB 202. Assisted suicide is dangerous for families. Suicide—self killing, weather by rope, gun, your own medicine cabinet, or a handful of pills from your doctor, or any other means, is a tragedy and the aftermath that is left in the wake of an act like this, can damage family relationships for a lifetime. My own mother was a dialysis patient and my sister who was the POA for healthcare, and was the family member who lived in the same city as my mom, was burned out after almost 5 years of dealing with her healthcare situation, though my mom was in a nursing home.

My sister decided my mother should not do dialysis anymore and announced to the family that mom was going to be discontinuing her weekly treatments. My mother was not demented; she did not have Alzheimer's; she could make her own decisions, but she was never consulted regarding this decision. She was weak; she was vulnerable; and I know for a fact this is not the course she would have chosen for herself. I will never forget the look of horror on my mother's face when she was told she "didn't have to do dialysis anymore." She knew full well what that meant. I was powerless to change my sister's mind. Coming from a family of six children this decision left us divided, fractured, angry, and hurt, and has damaged once close family relationships that have remained unreconciled to this day.

If this kind of damage can be done to families when assisted suicide is not legal, imagine the damage to families when a suicide is involved and families are spilt, guilt surfaces, and accusations are hurled. Assisted suicide, if enacted will affect families, even for generations, as details get passed down. The proposal that would make this legal does not even require family notification. Imagine walking into your mother's care facility and finding she is not in her room and you are told that the doctor helped her kill herself last night. How would you feel? Angry! Sad---grief stricken. Guilty—didn't we visit her enough? Was she concerned about the money we were spending for her care?

The abuses that can emanate from a law like this are myriad. Realize that in the bill that advocates assisted suicide, someone else can speak on behalf of the person, if they are familiar with the patient's manner of communicating. Consider, caretakers get tired, overwhelmed, like my sister. Don't ignore the heir that would rather get the inheritance sooner rather than later and steers the decision, perhaps feeling the cost of care is eating up too many valuable resources. Soon the right to die becomes the duty to die. My mother was not a disease to be treated, but a human being to be loved and cared for with compassion: coming along side and helping her to bear her burden until the end.

Let me ask each one of you: would you give your mother/father/son/daughter a lethal dose of medication to kill them, or do you just want to cloak this act in an aura of legitimacy by having someone in a white coat do it.

There are numerous situations for abuse and who would know, as no witness is required. Consent can easily be abused, coerced, forced, urged and all of this so carefully concealed. So I urge you to put in place, measures that would not allow assisted suicide in Montana and vote against SB 202.