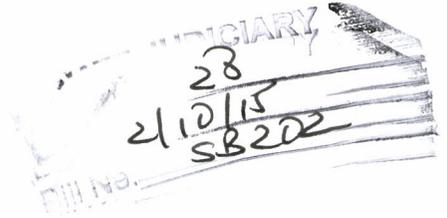


February 10, 2015

SB 202



Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jennifer Gilbert, and I reside and work as a Family Physician in Missoula. I am here to speak in opposition to Senate Bill 202.

I believe that legalizing Physician Assisted Suicide is dangerous, because it destroys trust, which is the foundation of the doctor-patient relationship. When patients come into my office, they will often tell me the most intimate secrets in their lives, they take off their clothes and they let me examine them. They share details that they often would not even share with their spouses because they know that I am not going to betray their trust or take advantage of them.

But to assume that physicians are ideal moral agents is foolish. We physicians can be wrong--in diagnosis, in prognosis, and in motive. We get tired; we get frustrated, especially when people are dying. It's tempting to solve doing away with the patient when you can't do away with the disease. It is the easy option for a busy, stressed or frustrated physician, as it takes no great skill to kill, but it does take skill to provide superb end-of-life care. And, because of the trust placed in me, I could easily convince a patient that death is a reasonable step, just by how I describe the patient's diagnosis and prognosis.

To give physicians too much power and to hold to the assumption that medicine does not need a moral boundary is dangerous. I know a lot of physicians that I would be happy to send my family members to, and I know others that I wouldn't send my dog to, and unfortunately if we legalize Physician Assisted Suicide, there is no good way to tell between the two. If we couldn't control Jack Kevorkian when it was illegal, what makes us think we can control 700,000 physicians when it is?

When you destroy trust, you will destroy healthcare. I already have to deal with mistrust from my patients for a myriad of reasons (pharmaceutical companies, electronic medical records, the government's role, and vaccines, just to name a few). The truth is, we have a lot of problems in healthcare, and we do not need this one added as well. Everyone has the right to commit suicide, but please do not make this part of a physician's job description.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer C. Gilbert, MD". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

Jennifer C. Gilbert, MD