

To the Select Committee considering the End of Life Choice Bill.

I making this submission in opposition to this bill.

My reasons for this are as follows:

1. With respect to the medical community, our doctors are the very people who should protect, care and heal, and with whom we should have a relationship based on trust. I believe this bill undermines that critical trust relationship and goes squarely against the ethical framework within which doctors should care for their patients. Doctors should bring their patients life, rather than death. It is not surprising to me that the medical community considers physician assisted suicide and euthanasia unethical (even if they were made legal) and I wholeheartedly agree. Please do not ask those who train to care for us to participate in what they consider to be unethical. Leave them instead to focus on saving lives and providing real care to the dying
2. We have outstanding palliative care in NZ, and this is not powerless to alleviate the suffering of individuals. The enormous good carried out by our medical professionals who work in the area of palliative care is based upon the absolute trust in the philosophy of care and motives of palliative care physicians and hospice staff, and this is at serious risk of being undermined by this bill.
3. We have an incredibly high youth suicide rate in New Zealand. The introduction of this Bill would reduce the value of human life in our culture, and it would undermine our ability to uphold the value of life within a vulnerable group (eg. youth), while opening up options to death in another group. I want my children to grow up in a culture that values life, and does not provide options for suicide or for having a legalised set of individuals able to kill other people.
4. International experience shows that once euthanasia and assisted suicide are introduced, criteria for eligibility are expanded reasonably quickly, and the wording of this bill contains phrases that are vague, ambiguous and open to broad interpretation. Please do not open the door to this possibility.
5. The most vulnerable people in our society such as the disabled, those suffering mental illness, the elderly, will be made even more vulnerable if this bill is introduced, with the very real possibility that the autonomous choice to die, may be felt by the most vulnerable as a duty to die. Our culture and our laws must protect us from the choice of having to consider if we should choose to die if we feel a burden on our families. The most vulnerable are often the least capable of making healthy decisions and should be protected, rather than offered the choice of death. Please do not devalue the worth of a life in our culture where the vulnerable already struggle.

Thank you for you time.