



# ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII



## Hawaii Catholic Conference The Public Policy Voice of the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii

Submitted Electronically: March 20, 2017

### COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Rep. Della Au Belatti, Chair

Rep. Bertrand Kobayashi, Vice Chair

**HEARING:** Thursday, March 23, 2017 @ 8:30 a.m. in room #329  
**SUBMITTED BY:** Walter Yoshimitsu, Executive Director  
**POSITION:** **STRONG OPPOSITION TO SB 1129 SD 2 Relating to Health**

The Hawaii Catholic Conference is the official public policy voice for the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Hawaii. The above-referenced bill would establish a death with dignity act under which a terminally ill adult resident may obtain a prescription for a lethal dose to end the patient's life. The Hawaii Catholic Conference **opposes** this bill for many reasons.

- It can blur longstanding medical, moral and legal distinctions between withdrawing extraordinary medical assistance and taking active steps to destroy human life. One lets people die a natural death; the other is the deliberate and direct act of hastening death.
- It can undermine the physician's role as healer, forever alter the doctor-patient relationship, and lessen the quality of care provided to patients at the end of life. The American Medical Association has stated that assisted suicide is "fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role" and would be "difficult or impossible to control."
- It can lead to psychological, financial and other pressures for vulnerable persons to end their lives. In today's era of health care rationing and cost-cutting, assisted suicide could easily rise to the level of the most acceptable, and even expected, "treatment" for terminal illness.

Rather than giving the doctors the legal protection to kill their patients, government should be consistent in its efforts to prevent it. It is illogical for the state to promote/facilitate suicide for one group of persons — calling the suicides of those with a terminal illness and a specific prognosis "dignified and humane," while recognizing suicide as a serious statewide public health concern in all other circumstances, and spending enormous resources to combat it.

Assisting in a person's death is not medical treatment, no matter how it is spun. In Hawai'i, everyone, especially our kupuna, deserves better than a doctor who dispenses pills to intentionally cause death. Patients are best served when medical professionals, together with families and loved ones, provide support and care with dignity and respect, not lethal doses of drugs. Improved education and training of physicians in pain management, together with appropriate diagnosis and treatment for depression, would go a long way toward eliminating calls for suicide among the sick and the dying.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.