

A136 (Paulin)

S138 (Hoylman-Sigal)

NYSNA Memorandum in Support

Medical Aid In Dying Act

The New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) represents more than 42,000 nurses for collective bargaining and is a leading advocate for high quality universal access to health care services.

The Medical Aid in Dying Act would allow adults (18 or older) who are diagnosed with a terminal illness or condition to request and self-administer medications to end their life and avoid the prospect of a slow and painful death if that is their personal preference.

The proposed legislation includes various protections and protocols to ensure that each person has the capacity to make an informed decision, protects physicians and other health professionals from legal liability for dispensing and/or assisting the patient in ending their life, allows health professionals to opt out of participating on moral grounds, and establishes stringent processes to ensure that the patient's choice is fully informed and voluntary. The law will only apply to cases where there is a confirmed terminal diagnosis and the patient has less than six months to live.

As an advocate for universal access to care, NYSNA also recognizes and supports the right of patients to refuse treatment and to make their own decision to end their suffering when faced with a terminal condition. The right to end one's life in such circumstances is consistent with the principles of bodily autonomy, privacy, and self-determination.

Patients should not be forced to endure needless pain and suffering or to resort to violent or ineffective means of ending their lives under such circumstances.

Currently ten states and the District of Columbia allow medical assistance in dying with restrictions and safeguards similar to those in this legislation, including California, Vermont and New Jersey. In addition, medical assistance in dying is permitted to varying degrees in numerous other nations, including Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Switzerland. Similar legislation has just passed a first vote in the British Parliament and is expected to become law shortly.

New Yorkers should have the right to a dignified and painless death at the time and place of their choosing when faced with a terminal illness.

NYSNA urges the legislature to pass the Medical Aid in Dying Act (A136/S138).