

## **HB 2279 – Death w/ Dignity Act**

### **Floor Comments**

To the bill

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I rise in support of HB 2279 for several reasons.

First and foremost, this bill was written at the request of the former governor on behalf of the Oregon Health Authority to fulfill an agreement resulting from a 2022 lawsuit settlement. In short, it will bring Oregon into compliance with the US Constitution, which we are currently violating by prohibiting out-of-state residents from receiving medical care in Oregon.

Second, and more personally, I support this bill because it provides people with a choice. We will all face our mortality someday, by some currently unknown means and at some currently unknown time. And very few of us will have input on either of these variables... but some of us might.

This bill enables those who are facing a known and difficult death the freedom to exert a measure of control in the midst of very difficult circumstances. It allows them to make the choices they think physically, emotionally, and financially are best for themselves and those they love.

I have twice seen how each of these decisions can impact friends and families:

1. In 1996 my wife's first husband, Gary Beattie, passed away at the age of 25 from colon cancer. My wife, being the incredible person that she is, drove Gary to Portland, from Corvallis, for his treatment for several years. She cared for him during his final days, when he was suffering the most, and was with him in the bedroom when he passed. She still distinctly remembers feeling his last heartbeat. I know how she is still impacted every December, almost 30 years later.
2. In my own family, my grandmother, in her late 70s, suffered a sudden and severe stroke one morning that left her unable to move or speak. For hours she lay on the cold, hard tiles of her bathroom floor, scared and alone, until

an astute neighbor sensed something was wrong and called a family member to check on her.

Weeks later, lying in a hospital bed and connected to a respirator, her doctor delivered the horrible news that her lungs were very weak, too weak to allow her to ever breathe again on her own.

Eleanor Conrad loved life, but she decided to have the respirator removed. She did not want to suffer any longer, or to force us to watch her suffer. My grandmother had lived with dignity, and so she chose to die with dignity, surrounded by her family.

When fate forces our hand, we have to choose. I've seen firsthand the emotional and psychological toll suicide can inflict on friends and family. Whether the spouse hears the gunshot and comes running into the bedroom to find their spouse lifeless, with a gruesome gunshot wound to the head, or they come home and find them bleeding out in the bathtub, while the decorated Christmas tree with presents underneath, sits in the living room. For some, there comes a time when a decision will have to be made. I choose to enable people to make the choice that is right for them, their family and their circumstances.

Colleagues, for this reason I urge an aye vote.