



204 SW 8TH AVE • TOPEKA, KANSAS 66603 • PHONE 785-227-9247 • FAX 785-861-7438 • WWW.KSCATHCONF.ORG

Proponent Testimony for HCR 5010

Michael Schuttloffel, Executive Director, Kansas Catholic Conference

House Committee on Health and Human Services

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Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Catholic Conference strongly supports HCR 5010. We stand committed to upholding the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, and therefore we strongly oppose physician assisted suicide.

The Catholic Church has since time immemorial been involved in providing health care to some of society's most vulnerable people. We know how difficult and frightening end-of-life circumstances can be. It is precisely when a person is facing his or her own mortality, and is afraid of a protracted and painful death, or of being a burden to loved ones, that society should be offering its support and affirming that person's human dignity and inestimable value.

It has been well documented that individuals who take their own lives often suffer from depression. When a person is depressed, treatment for depression is the appropriate response, not cooperation in the taking of that person's life. Sadly, morally distorted judgments about "quality of life" have made assaults on the dignity of the human person, like assisted suicide, seem less radical than they are. But make no mistake: under a regime of legal assisted suicide, the message is sent to people at their most vulnerable that some lives are not worth living. When people are facing the toughest days of their lives, they need our care and reassurance that their life is important -- not the suggestion that they might be better off dead.

Supporters of assisted suicide undoubtedly seek to eliminate the suffering of people facing hardship, but assisted suicide in fact eliminates the person. Pope Francis has described physician assisted suicide in terms of a "false compassion" that is part of a "throwaway culture." His warning that "The dignity of human life is at stake. The dignity of the medical vocation is at stake," succinctly encapsulates the entire issue.

We should not ever consider opening the door to the use of death as a form of "health care." As laid out by HCR 5010, the State of Kansas should continue its policy of forbidding assisted suicide and should encourage efforts to improve palliative care and other ethical forms of treatment to meet the human need that will always be with us. Thank you for your consideration.

MOST REVEREND JOHN B. BRUNGARDT, D.D.
DIOCESE OF DODGE CITY

MOST REVEREND JOSEPH F. NAUMANN, D.D.
Chairman of Board
ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

MOST REVEREND EDWARD J. WEISENBURGER, J.C.L.
DIOCESE OF SALINA

MOST REVEREND CARL A. KEMME, D.D.
DIOCESE OF WICHITA

MICHAEL M. SCHUTTLOFFEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR