

Anita Cameron Oral Testimony against H.2381/S.1384 October 1, 2021, Joint Committee on Public Health

I'm Anita Cameron, Director of Minority Outreach for Not Dead Yet, a national disability rights organization opposed to medical discrimination, healthcare rationing, euthanasia and doctor assisted suicide.

H.2381/S.1384 is dangerous because though these laws are supposed to be for people with six months or less to live, doctors are sometimes wrong about a terminal diagnosis. My mother, while living in Washington state, was determined to be at the end stage of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. I was told her death was imminent, that if I wanted to see her alive, I should get there in two days. She rallied, but was still quite ill, so she was placed in hospice. Her doctor said that her body had begun the process of dying.

Though she survived 6 months of hospice, her doctor convinced her that her body was still in the process of dying, and she moved home to Colorado to die.

My mum didn't die. She became active in her community and lived almost 12 years!

H.2381/S.1384 will put sick people, seniors and disabled people, especially, at risk due to the view of doctors that disabled people have a lower quality of life, therefore leading them to devalue our lives. Now add race and racial disparities in healthcare to this. Blacks, in particular, receive inferior health care compared to whites in the areas of cardiac care, diabetes, cancer and pain management.

As a Black Latina, I didn't see assisted suicide as part of my culture. This is borne out in a 2013 Pew study that shows Blacks and Latinos are 65% opposed to doctor assisted suicide and in states where it's legal, rarely use the program. Doctor assisted suicide proponents tend to be white professional and managerial class folks.

What's especially dangerous is that in states where it's legal, if you lose access to healthcare, turning your chronic condition into a terminal one, you can request assisted suicide. It'll be cheaper to kill you than to care for you.

As long as disability discrimination and racial disparities in healthcare exist, assisted suicide laws like H.2381/S.1384 have no place in Massachusetts. Please vote no on H.2381/S.1384.