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Statement against S.1384 by Second Thoughts MA Director, John B. Kelly

Over the last 15 years, the Mass legislature and, in 2012, the people of the state, have wisely rejected the legalization of assisted suicide as too dangerous. The legislature should likewise reject S1384, which despite its name does not provide dying people "end-of-life options."

The tragic reality is that under legalized assisted suicide, some people's lives will be ended without their true consent, through misdiagnosis, persuasion, coercion and abuse, insurance denials and depression. No safeguards have ever been enacted or proposed that can prevent this outcome, which can never be undone.

NPR reported five years ago that up to 20% of people who enter hospice outlive their six months prognosis. In Oregon, 4% of people who enter the assisted suicide program are alive at the end of six months. The difference between 4% and 20% is the percent of people and their families who may have lost months, years, and in some cases decades of meaningful life.

There is no way to contain eligibility to a narrow set of people. Anorexia nervosa and diabetes now qualify as terminal conditions in other states. Disabled people like me are eligible in Canada, and some predict disabled people will be eligible here.

Proponents always talk about pain and suffering, but the end-of-life concerns in Oregon show that people are upset about depending on other people and are feeling like a burden.

Just as many people disqualify me from full humanity because of my disability, some people disqualify themselves and are disqualified by others when they need help.

The state of Massachusetts must not sponsor people's suicides because other people consider them a burden, because they believe they are dying when they are not, and because they have been denied the treatment and support services that would keep them alive.

NPR reference: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/08/11/542607941/nearly-1-in-5-hospice-patients-discharged-while-still-alive>