January 24, 2024

I am here in support of HF1930, the Minnesota End-of-Life Options Act.

As a daughter of a woman who chose to use VSED, Voluntary Stopping Eating and Drinking, to hasten her death, I understand the importance of bodily autonomy. My mother, Cheryl Hauser, was locally and nationally recognized for her decision to not live the final stages of Alzheimer’s which would steal her dignity but instead brought hope and inspiration to our community as her story was one of the most popular aired in 2023 on MPR with Cathy Wurzer and local news stations. It was clear, people are interested in options around their end of life. These are options.

As an end-of-life doula, I have witnessed numerous loved ones ready, and sometimes pleading, for their life to end because of a painful, incurable disease which has taken away their grace, comfort and joy, leaving families feeling helpless. They would like options.

As a teenager I lost a dear friend to suicide on my first day of our senior year. Kevin, a bright and athletic young man took a gun to his head and killed himself. He had depression, he told no one and was alone that night he died. Kevin was not terminally ill and did not have a prognosis of six months or less to live. Thus, my friend would have never qualified to receive Medical Aid in Dying in any state where this bill has been legalized.

And as an English major, I understand how words matter. When we name something, this determines how we think about it. As cultural anthropologist, Anita Hannig, points out “until just recently, the primary term in the English language for a purposeful death of oneself was suicide. We simply had no other ways of referring to this idea of an intentional self death.”

But times have simply changed. And over the past 25 years since Oregon enacted the country’s first Medical Aid in Dying law, along with 9 other states plus Washington D.C. joining the movement, a Medical Aid in Dying death has occupied a new legal and moral category.

Because, please hear my words, a Medical Aid in Dying death today is a new medical response to the shattering and overwhelming reality of a terminal illness. Please, allow this to be an option for Minnesotans.

Thank you,

Wendy Brown

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End-of-Life Doula

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