

Roberta DiMezza

From: Danielle Sawka <danielle_sawka@brown.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 2:30 PM
To: Rep. Craven, Robert E.; Rep. McEntee, Carol Hagan; Rep. Knight, Jason; Rep. Ajello, Edith H.; Rep. Batista, Jose F.; Rep. Bennett, David A.; Rep. Caldwell, Justine A.; Rep. Casimiro, Julie A.; Rep. Corvese, Arthur J.; Rep. Cruz, Cherie L.; Rep. Dawson, Matthew S.; Rep. Felix, Leonela; Rep. Hopkins, Marie A.; Rep. Noret, Thomas E.; Rep. Place, David J.; House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Opposition to Bill H5219
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Judiciary Committee and Committee Clerk,

My name is Danielle Sawka and I am currently a medical student at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. I strongly oppose House bill 5219, titled An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Lila Manfield Sapinsley Compassionate Care Act.

I cannot support bill H5219 because we are obligated to enact the Hippocratic Oath to do no harm to our patients. My classmates and I have devoted hours beyond hours learning medications to reduce pain and suffering, practicing how to speak compassionately with patients to aid in emotional distress, and dedicating ourselves to learn about the human body down to the smallest level so that we might recognize and ameliorate illness. We aspire to be like the physicians who mentor us, who always teach us how to help (even if we cannot heal) and never to harm.

The honorable profession of a physician was established with the specific, intentional goal of not further hurting those who are already hurting. And yet prescribing a lethal prescription for a patient requesting to end their life is exactly that: intentionally inflicting harm. I deeply understand the desire to eliminate the burden of pain and suffering with death. But a magic “medication” to end the life of the suffering patient is not reducing the suffering. It is annihilating the sufferer. Medical professionals ethically and legally cannot be allowed to help patients kill themselves while upholding an Oath not to harm. Chemicals that when ingested result in death are chemicals that by very definition cause the most severe injury and harm imaginable to a person.

Bill H5219 is furthermore an abuse of physician power. Many patients who seek to end their life are understandably and tragically in distress. Physicians contractually cannot take advantage of these patients in a vulnerable state, and acquiesce to wishes made in such distress to cause self-harm.

I strongly urge you to vote against bill H5219 and any future similar bills in order to protect the field of medicine and the patients it serves.

Sincerely,
Danielle Sawka