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Patients Rights Action Fund  
LD 613

Thank you, committee chair and honorable members of the committee, for allowing me to testify. My name is Jessica Rodgers and I am the Coalitions Director for the Patients Rights Action Fund. I am testifying in opposition to LD 613, a bill that would further expand assisted suicide in Maine.

LD 613 would waive the important waiting period between patients requesting and receiving lethal drugs for the purpose of ending their life. The vague language of "best interests of the patient" has no medical standing and invites further abuse.

The Maine annual report already reports chronic, not terminal, conditions as qualifying. These conditions, listed by the state of Maine, include Crohn's Disease and essential hypertension - also known as high blood pressure. In practice, any condition that can become fatal when not treated qualifies under this policy. In Oregon and Washington, patients list financial implications of treatment as one of the reasons they request lethal drugs. As patients with chronic conditions stare down medical bills, they may find that assisted suicide makes financial sense for them.

A waiting period can help these most vulnerable patients from making a hasty decision due to financial fears. This waiting period was an essential safeguard that convinced this legislature to pass, by a single vote, the initial legislation. Now, we're told that this safeguard is a barrier; this tracks with what we see around the country and around the world, where proponents pass an initial bill with plans to come back later and continue to expand.

The waiting period provides some amount of protection for patients that are already put in danger by the legalization of this policy in the first place. To expand purely for the providers judgement of the "best interest" with no medical standard, is vague at best and dangerous at worse.

I urge you to stand up for all Maine residents at risk of coercion and abuse and to oppose LD 613. Thank you.