



VIRGINIA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Statement and Call to Action by Bishop Burbidge and Bishop Knestout on Assisted Suicide Legislation

Legislation to legalize physician assisted suicide is moving rapidly in this year's Virginia General Assembly session. The Senate and House have both taken steps to advance this lethal measure. Within the next week, floor debates in one or both chambers are likely to occur.

We are alarmed and deeply saddened by this development. Human life is sacred and must never be abandoned or discarded. At this critical moment, we implore the faithful across our two dioceses: Please contact your state Senator and Delegate. Urge them to reject assisted suicide legislation, using the alert provided by the Virginia Catholic Conference. To access the alert, [click here](#).

Every suicide is a tragedy. Assisted suicide facilitates tragedies and makes the most vulnerable even more vulnerable. Legalizing it would place the lives of people with disabilities, people with mental illnesses, the elderly, and those unable to afford healthcare – among others – at heightened risk of deadly harm.

In the few states where assisted suicide is legal, this troubling reality has already taken root. For example, insurance companies have denied coverage for cancer treatment and other life-saving procedures but offered to pay for cheaper suicide drugs instead. And in Oregon, only 3.3% of the patients who died by assisted suicide since its legalization in 1998 were referred for psychiatric evaluation.

People facing the end of life are in great need, and must be accompanied with great care and attentiveness. To address each of their needs and alleviate their suffering, patients deserve high quality medical, palliative, and hospice care – not suicide drugs.

Please tell the members of the Virginia General Assembly who represent you not to bring assisted suicide to our Commonwealth.

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In prayer and in public, your voices are urgently needed to bring Gospel values to bear on vital decisions being made by those who represent you.

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The Virginia Catholic Conference is the public policy agency representing Virginia's Catholic bishops and their two dioceses.