New York State Catholic Conference
The Official Voice of the Catholic Church in the Empire State

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Statement of the NYS Bishops on State-Sanctioned Suicide Bill

"Euthanasia and assisted suicide are a defeat for all. We are called never to abandon those who are suffering, never giving up but caring and loving to restore hope." – Pope Francis, 2019

On Easter Monday, April 21, Pope Francis ended his earthly journey and entered eternal life. The Holy Father gave us many examples to emulate throughout his life and ministry, even right to the end when he gave us an example of a holy, natural death.

Sadly, the very next day, news reports indicated that the New York State Assembly would take up legislation (A136/S138) to legalize state-sanctioned suicide for those who are diagnosed with a terminal illness. Euphemistically titled the Medical Aid in Dying Act, this bill would usher in a dangerous new era in our state, turning the Hippocratic Oath taken by physicians to "do no harm" on its head and leaving vulnerable individuals – people with disabilities, the elderly, and those in impoverished and medically underserved communities – subject to pressure and coercion to end their lives so as not to be a "burden" to society or an excessive cost to insurance companies.

One only need to look to the example of our neighbor to the north, Canada, to understand the risk. That country passed a similar law to New York's bill in 2016. Within a few short years, it was expanded to allow not only those with terminal illnesses, but also those with "chronic" illnesses, such as arthritis, to end their lives. In 2027, the law is set to expand to those whose only underlying condition is mental illness, such as depression, anxiety or anorexia.

At a time when New Yorkers are rightly concerned with issues such as affordability, crime, homelessness, federal cuts to Medicaid, behavioral health access, and their children's education, it is unconscionable that lawmakers would consider now an appropriate time to legalize suicide for a segment of the population.

Think of the message this sends. Sadly, we are facing a suicide crisis among young people in our state, and the government rightly spends large sums of money to prevent these tragedies and to deliver a consistent message that life is worth living. Now our state will be telling its citizens that some lives – perhaps where there has been a loss of autonomy or a disability – are *not* worth living. We pray that the legislature reconsiders this disastrous public policy, and we call on Governor Hochul to exercise her veto authority should the bill come to her desk.

– Timothy Cardinal Dolan and the Catholic Bishops of New York State

April 24, 2025