

Statement re: Bill C-7

An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)

Catholic health care has a long-standing moral tradition of compassionate care that neither prolongs dying nor hastens death. Catholic health care promotes the dignity of the person, and is founded on the belief that all life is sacred.

There is an essential ethical difference between allowing death to occur and intentionally ending a person's life. Catholic health organizations do not provide medical assistance in dying ("MAiD") because it is not in keeping with our fundamental values, ethical guidelines, mission, and religious purpose. Bill C-7 does not change this position, and in fact calls us to be more diligent about the obligation of Catholic health care to serve vulnerable populations and to address issues of systemic inequalities particularly at the end of life.

We respond to any patient who has questions about physician assisted death with compassion and sensitivity, without discrimination or coercion in an attempt to understand their situation and motivation. We witness to the fact that "MAiD" is not the only option and, in adhering to the importance of informed consent, we continue to engage in conversations with patients in our care and ensure that any underlying issues such as pain management, psychological, or spiritual concerns are addressed by the appropriate members of the health care team such as palliative care, chaplains, and psychologists.

We stand in solidarity with the Canadian disability-rights community in denouncing Bill C-7 as an affront to the equality of rights of people with disabilities. As a society, we have a duty to protect those amongst us that are most vulnerable, and ensure they have a voice. We can and must do better.

Catholic health care will continue to offer leadership in the development, delivery, and equitable access of excellent palliative and end-of-life care across Canada.

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