Dear Legislators,

Thank you for taking time to consider the ethical aspects of physician assisted suicide. As a neurologist, particularly dealing with older individuals with progressive neurological disease like Alzheimer's disease or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, i have serious concerns about physician assisted suicide creating a slippery slope and devaluing human life at the end of life. Patients who are afflicted with serious neurological conditions, may be subject to involuntary physician assisted suicide because it is deemed by those responsible, that their “life is not worth living”. There are many examples now of such behavior in places where physician assisted suicide has taken hold in Canada and Holland.

I view the path of physician assisted suicide as a failure of the medical care system. Specifically palliative care and hospice care, are designed to eliminate suffering at the end of life, and obviate the need for physician assisted suicide. These approaches do not require physicians to be death administrators. More commonly, physician assisted suicide is chosen because of anxiety about facing death, not because of intractable suffering.

Please vote against proposals in Minnesota for physician assisted suicide. I provide this opinion as a private and concerned citizen, and it does not reflect policies or directives from Mayo Clinic. I would be happy to amplify on my comments in more detail if useful. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Allen J Aksamit M.D.

Neurology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester MN