

Dear Committee members,

On January 25 of 2018, my mother died. She had suffered from progressive dementia for about six years. We ensured she had food and water (by straw, if necessary) until she was no longer capable of receiving sustenance without gagging or choking. Then we switched to using a swab to moisten her mouth. She died in hospice shortly thereafter without having suffered needlessly from the withholding of food and water.

And make no mistake: Dementia and Alzheimer's patients DO suffer terribly from the lack of food and water, just as the rest of us would. There is NO justification for withholding water and food from anyone of any age for any reason, including mental incompetency. My father has Alzheimer's, and no doubt we will follow the same supportive course of action for him—unless HB 4135 usurps our right to care for our loved one. End-of-life care is difficult and complicated enough without adding more ill-intentioned regulations.

What infuriates me is that the insurance industry has the temerity, the gall, to present this concept not once, but twice to the Oregon Legislature. What is the motivation behind HB 4135? It certainly isn't patient care or comfort. It's the money insurance companies hope to save by prematurely ending the lives of Alzheimer's and dementia patients. HB 4135 is also based upon the misguided and erroneous assumption that just because someone like my parents has undergone mental deterioration, their life no longer has any value. Every human life has value, regardless of the circumstances.

Please protect dementia and Alzheimer's patients. Don't rush the process of updating advance directives without ensuring that legal protections for these vulnerable people are kept in place. Please vote NO on HB 4135.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

William Burt
Hubbard, OR