

Well here we are again, less than a year later, still fighting the "Culture of Death."

How did we get to this place? How has it come to this?

My name is Sandra Morehouse. I live in Washington county and I have lived in Oregon since attending Oregon State, starting in 1964.

I know a lot about people with mental illness because for the past 28 years I have worked as an activity director, a life coach, a giver of care for people with some form of dementia. I also know a lot about people who are in the active stage of dying.

When a person is in the active stage of dying they are usually in bed, eyes closed, mouth open because breathing has become difficult. They are not looking for a meal or in need of anything.

I think that those that have written this bill do not have a clear picture of what death looks like. I have had in my care hundreds of people. NONE of whom have said to me that they wanted to die. I have found that even those with advanced dementia still have a will to live. They have joy in their life and aren't in a hurry to end that. It may be something very simple as eating a favorite meal, or a visit to the woods, a love song to sing, a baby to hold or a puppy to pet. Just simple pleasures of life that we all hold dear to our hearts.

I can't imagine what life would be like if caregivers were all of a sudden being told to actually withhold food and water from some of their residents. You know, starve them to death. That's actually murder in my way of thinking, especially because these people very often can not speak for themselves. You would need to be very desperate to die to be willing to starve.

Despite the temptation for some doctors and insurance companies to find a cheap answer to this expensive problem, we are all equal. People with disabilities, or terminally ill people, as those with dementia or other mental illness, are no less human than any of us in this room. In fact, if statistics prove correct, half of the people in this room will one day have dementia.

I agree with what the Bible says on this: We who are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. We all have the right to life.



