

To the House Health Care Committee in regards to the proposed HB 4135:

Please protect all people, including those with dementia and Alzheimer's. Don't rush the process of updating advance directives without ensuring legal protections are kept in place for these vulnerable people.

To refuse food and drink to a person, regardless of their mental status, is CRIMINAL! Having worked in long term care nursing for twenty-eight years, I know that when a person is ready or unable to eat or drink any longer, they will not do so. It is a basic function and desire of human beings.

If a person is no longer able to drink independently or feed themselves, it does not mean that they should not have every opportunity to have someone assist them in this basic need. I firmly believe that they should not be forced to eat or drink but that they should be offered and assisted in consumption of food and fluids as a basic comfort measure.

If a Directive to Physician or POLST directs no artificial methods of giving food or fluids, such as a feeding tube or IV fluids, that does not negate offering food and fluids by mouth. To have a family member or POA be given the right to direct this neglect would be criminal. It would certainly negatively affect care workers who already have many stressors in their occupation. Most people who work in long term care are there because they truly care for the residents they work with and they would wish no harm to willfully come to them. The ones who are there just for a job don't last.

I firmly believe that life is precious in all stages, from the time of conception to the time the Lord calls one to his/her eternal rest. Taking life prematurely to God's plan is wrong. Please vote to affirm LIFE and not death.

Sincerely,

Karen Gehrke

Forest Grove, Oregon