

# New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops



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Most Reverend Michael J. Sheehan, Archbishop Emeritus

## **Diocese of Las Cruces**

Most Reverend Gerald Kicanas, Apostolic Administrator | Bishop Emeritus of Tucson

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## **Diocese of Gallup**

Most Reverend James S. Wall, Bishop

## **New Mexico Conference of Bishops**

Allen Sánchez, Executive Director

Deacon Steve Rangel, Associate Director

## **STATEMENT**

### **Opposition to New Mexico House Bill 90**

ALBUQUERQUE – Thursday, January 17, 2019– IMMEDIATE RELEASE – As the Catholic Bishops of New Mexico, we express our opposition to the New Mexico House Bill 90, which proposes to legalize assisted suicide.

Most of us have experienced a dear friend or a close family member who has suffered a disease or illness which has led to a painful death. There are few experiences harder than watching a family member or friend ravaged by pain or illness as they approach an inevitable death. Questions of pain and suffering, soaring medical expenses, our desire to maintain control and dignity, as well as the desire not to be a burden on our family, are difficult and challenging concerns. Legalizing suicide is not the solution. In the face of these challenges, we should support and accompany our loved ones with genuine compassion, not with the false compassion of assisted suicide.

There is an excellent, effective and ethical alternative to assisted suicide; namely, palliative or comfort care. Today we have incredible medical remedies and technology to address pain and suffering. The purpose of palliative care is to provide as much comfort as possible to enable the patient to face their inevitable transition from life to death. Palliative care is good medicine and it is good public policy. There is an old adage in medicine, “cure sometimes, relieve occasionally, but care always”.

It has been proposed that assisted suicide is intended to painlessly and easily end the suffering leading up to death; a proposition which itself denies the ethical options for end-of-life treatment. The consequences of such a proposition have ultimately expanded to include euthanasia for a

myriad of other cited issues, up to and including: depression, mental illness, non-lethal illnesses, and the financial burden of medical treatment. Do we ultimately consider suicide a good act, as it permanently ends that person's suffering? What does this say for how we view our mentally ill brothers and sisters? For those with physical disabilities? Are their lives "less desirable"? If not, why should we consider suicide an option?

Among the dangerous concessions in HB90 are:

- allowances for euthanasia via remote, impersonal diagnosis;
- a two-day waiting period;
- permission for non-New Mexican residents to receive euthanasia (essentially making our state open to "suicide tourism");
- restrictions on healthcare professionals who conscientiously object to euthanasia, and many more.

Further, we have seen pharmaceutical companies and health insurers hold themselves accountable to profit margins rather than the care of the patient: denying medical treatment and lifesaving medicine in favor of less expensive, lethal options available resulting from assisted suicide legislation.

In the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' document, *To Live Each Day with Dignity: A Statement on Physician Assisted Suicide*, we read, "Respect for life does not demand that we attempt to prolong life by using artificial treatments that are ineffective or unduly burdensome. Nor does it mean we should deprive suffering patients of needed medications out of a misplaced or exaggerated fear that they may have the side effects of shortening life.... In fact, severe pain can shorten life, while effective palliative care can enhance the length as well as the quality of a person's life. It can even alleviate the fears and problems that lead some patients to the desperation of considering suicide.... Effective palliative care also allows patients to devote their attention to the unfinished business of their lives, to arrive at a sense of peace with God, with loved ones and with themselves. Learning how to face this last stage of our earthly lives is one of the most important and meaningful things each of us will do, and caregivers who help people through this process are also doing enormously important work...."

Oppose NM House Bill 90.

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