

January 25, 2021

Dear Senator,

As community rabbis, we write on behalf of ourselves and our Jewish communities to express our very grave concerns about Bill C-7 and the expansion of “medical assistance in dying” (MAiD). One of Judaism’s fundamental precepts is the value of human life. Indeed the current COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the great lengths that the Government of Canada and the entire world has gone to protect the most vulnerable amongst us. Yet, Bill C-7 endangers the lives of some of these very same vulnerable Canadians.

As rabbis, we have heard of tragic situations where the ill or aged are unduly pressured to end their lives. We hear from physicians about pressures they are facing to end the lives of their patients against their deeply held beliefs. And we hear from people who have mental or physical illnesses who would be best served by a health system that allocated resources to help support them live, rather than facilitate their death. As rabbis one of our main functions is counseling congregants some of whom are suffering from either physical or mental illness. As front line workers in this regard, we see firsthand how these vulnerable people may want to end their lives when they are at their lowest, but after counseling, many rebound to live happy and meaningful lives. The lives of these Canadians have value and we ask the Government of Canada to protect them.

We urge you to amend Bill C-7 to protect people from being preyed upon and to ensure that doctors are not required to participate if it violates their religious beliefs or moral conscience.

We recommend the following avenues for achieving these goals:

1. We ask that Bill C-7 be amended so that only patients initiate MAiD discussions, and the doctor should never bring it up as a treatment option (to avoid subtle patient coercion in the context of despair or suicidality).
2. We ask for stronger conscience rights for medical professionals to refrain from participating directly and indirectly in MAiD if they so choose.
3. We ask for meaningful care infra-structure to be accessible and provided for patients throughout their lives including medical, disability, home and social supports.
4. We ask for oversight mechanisms to ensure compliance with regulations, appropriate medical care has been provided to patient and no forms of abuse are detected before the lethal injection is given.

We would be happy to meet with you virtually to discuss this issue in further detail.

Canada has always been a compassionate nation. Compassion requires that we extend our hands to those in their moments of weakness, when they have given up on life. We ask that you extend that compassion to our fellow Canadians who are most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Yoir Adler

Rabbi Messod Azoulay

Rabbi Avrohom Bartfeld

Rabbi Yisroel Bollag

Rabbi Eliezer Breitowitz

Rabbi Chanoch Ehrentreau

Rabbi Yacov Felder

Rabbi Shea Fuhrer

Rabbi Seth Grauer

Rabbi Binyomin Greenbaum

Rabbi Yechezkel Gryzman

Rabbi Ovadya Haboucha

Rabbi David Kadoch

Rabbi Mordechai Kanner

Rabbi Yossel Kanofsky

Rabbi Mendel Kaplan

Rabbi Uri Kaufman

Rabbi Yaakov Kaufman

Rabbi Daniel Korobkin

Rabbi Chaim Dovid Kulik

Rabbi Baruch Lichtenstein

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Rabbi Yossi Michalowitz

Rabbi Yirmiya Milevsky

Rabbi Shlomo E Miller

Rabbi Yisroel Y Muller

Rabbi Yehuda Oppenheimer

Rabbi Yoseph Oziel

Rabbi Avraham Plotkin

Rabbi Avram Rothman

Rabbi Mordechai Scheiner

Rabbi Dovid Schochet

Rabbi Zev Spitz

Rabbi Chaim Strauchler

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