



# New York State COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

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## MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

### New York Medical Aid in Dying Act (A.995c/S.2445c)

The Medical Aid in Dying Act (A.995c/S.2445c) would allow a terminally ill, mentally capable adult to request life-ending medication from a doctor that the person can self-administer at a time of his or her choosing, or never, should suffering become unbearable.

Founded in 1893, New York State Council of Churches is comprised of 9 mainline protestant denominations committed to shaping public policy that uplifts the poor, disenfranchised and those who suffer. Our 7500 congregations are not all of one mind on the question of Medical Aid and dying. Indeed, some parishioners may oppose this legislation. For the most part, however, we are all interested in offering compassionate pastoral care to people who must endure life threatening illnesses with no prospect of relief. We understand when it comes to end of life matters being overly dogmatic without taking account of the complexity of the pastoral situation rarely has a good outcome.

For these reasons, we support the right of terminally ill individuals to have a full range of choices for dying in ways that provide them comfort. Medical aid in dying provides peace of mind to terminally ill patients. It allows a doctor to write a prescription for medication in response to a request from a terminally ill, mentally capable adult. The person can take the medication so long as they can self-administer it, in order to achieve a peaceful death. The availability of this option, even for those who choose not to take the medication in the end, will improve the quality of end-of-life care for terminally ill New Yorkers.

Medical aid in dying is needed because:

- too many New Yorkers suffer needlessly at the end of life;
- too many endure unrelenting pain at the end of life;
- too many turn to violent means at the end of life when medical aid could help them die peacefully; and
- too many feel they have little control over their own life (and death) when a terminal illness has taken over.

Expanding choice and care at the end of life provides New Yorkers autonomy. Studies have shown that patients who receive counseling about end-of-life choices score higher on quality of life and mood measures than patients who do not.

For the aforementioned reasons, the New York State Council of Churches supports New York's Medical Aid in Dying Act and urges the legislature to act swiftly to pass it.

In faith,

The Reverend Peter Cook  
Executive Director