

MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

49 Franklin Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02110-1304 (617) 574-0771

INFORMATION AND NEWS RELEASE

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STATEMENT ON OREGON REFERENDUM ON ASSISTED SUICIDE

We are saddened by yesterday's vote in Oregon to keep a seriously flawed statute on the books that legalizes assisted suicide for the terminally ill. Among other flaws, the statute

- reduces an entire class of persons to second class citizenship, stigmatizing them as having lives not worthy of equal protection;
- exposes vulnerable persons to increased risks of mistake and abuse by lacking even basic safeguards;
- lowers the standard of care for physicians, and immunizes them from liability even when they carelessly misdiagnose a person's competency or condition.

Despite the valiant efforts of a broad coalition of medical, legal, and religious groups to repeal a law that even its supporters admit is poorly conceived, Oregon remains the first and only state to immunize physicians from penalty for helping their terminally ill patients to kill themselves. In the face of calls to replicate Oregon's misguided policy in Massachusetts, we must redouble our efforts to provide better care for the dying, and we must address the very real fears of pain and abandonment that give rise to suicidal desires. Killing is not the answer!