

DO NO HARM **CALIF** **ORNIA**

Assisted Suicide Bill Strikes Nerve with California Doctors ***Do No Harm California* Petition Launched**

SAN DIEGO, May 22- St. Gianna Physician's Guild, an association of physicians and medical professionals, launched today its *Do No Harm California* petition opposing California Senate Bill 128 which aims to legalize physician-assisted suicide. The proposed controversial physician-assisted suicide legislation struck a nerve within the medical community throughout California leading to action by concerned doctors. Physicians are troubled that the bill fundamentally alters a doctor's healing prerogative and ethical safeguards for doctors and patients alike. The *Do No Harm California* Petition campaign seeks to educate legislators as to the fallacy of their proposal and sway them to abandon the initiative.

"Legislators, with few exceptions, are not medical professionals. Crafting legislation without proper vetting and input from across the medical community is inviting bad medicine into our hospitals and homes," commented Dr. Fritz Baumgartner, a cardiothoracic and vascular surgeon from Los Angeles, and spokesperson for the organization. "Framing this issue solely focused on a patient's decision to take their own life due to a terminal illness and foregoing all considerations of the physician's professional role as a healer is wide of the mark regarding this issue," continued Baumgartner.

The petition looks to garner support of doctors, nurses as well as the general public across the state. It has as its core focus opposition to the enactment of the End of Life Option Act. That act would authorize an adult who meets certain qualifications, and who has been determined by his or her attending physician to be suffering from a terminal illness, to request physician-prescribed lethal medication for the purpose of ending his or her life.

"Healing is not, nor ever can be, synonymous in any way with homicide. A Congressman or Senator legislating that physician-assisted suicide fits somehow within the realm of 'healing' will

never change what healing actually is,” explains Baumgartner. “Hence, the proposed legislation is flawed inherently from all aspects: ethical, moral and medical. It turns twenty-four hundred years of adherence to the Hippocratic Oath on its head,” Baumgartner concludes.

The petition outlines key failings contained within the bill that are a detriment to medical professionals. The bill forces doctors to violate the Hippocratic Oath and their freedom of conscience to practice medicine in a moral and ethical manner. Further, it distorts the fundamental principles of healing which is the primary directive for physicians, a consequence of which is the undermining of the doctor-patient relationship of trust.

The *Do No Harm California* petition is receiving support across the state from medical professionals, the public, as well as faith-based organizations. The California Catholic Conference is endorsing it as an initiative in coalition with similar groups. “St. Gianna’s Physician’s Guild decided that its *Do No Harm California* petition campaign would be a major initiative since it relates directly to our membership and goals of our organization. We do look at this debate through a lens of Catholic morality; however, the ethical dilemma foisted upon all physicians by this bill transcends any religious affiliations. The Hippocratic Oath is a medical standard that unifies all doctors and one that we must defend together,” affirmed Thomas McKenna, president of the organization.

To join the campaign and sign the petition, physicians, nurses and the general public may find more information at www.donoharmcalifornia.org