

# Federal Implementation of Physician-Assisted Suicide Legislation

Madeline Klineman

## POLICY PROPOSAL

**ARTIST'S STATEMENT:** To develop stronger and more varied end-of-life treatment care plans, end stigmatization of death, and strengthen the economic stability of healthcare in America, it is imperative that the Department of Health and Human Services adapt the Washington State Death with Dignity Act 70.245 RCW to the national level, legalizing and increasing regulations for physician-assisted suicide in the United States. Currently, in the United States, healthcare spending is at an all-time high and costs the country \$3.3 trillion dollars annually. It is imperative to reduce spending while also increasing the choice that patients have in their care. One major sector of healthcare spending is end-of-life care and according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, "63% of those who say their own health is only fair or poor...say most people in the U.S. have too little control" (Hamel, et. al, 2014). Per the same report, over 75% of Americans support "having Medicare cover discussions between doctors and patients about end-of-life treatment options" (Hamel, et. al, 2014). One treatment that is not discussed is physician-assisted suicide (referred to in this proposal as PAS). This is because, at the federal level, PAS is illegal and unsupported in the medical community. Dr. Atul Gawande, executive director of Ariadne Labs and professor at Harvard School of Public Health argues that "Congress need[s] to incentivize healthcare systems...by initiating...changes that are more likely to make a difference" (Gawande). It is critical to the aging population of America to be able to discuss freely their medical decisions regarding palliative and end-of-life care with their medical providers. To solve this financial, restrictive, and ethical challenge posed to the American people and government, United States Congress and the Department of Health and Human Services must implement new regulations, following the design of Washington's Death with Dignity Act, to legalize and strongly regulate PAS across the country.

**ACADEMIC YEAR:** 2019

**SCHOOL:** NHS

**MAJOR:** Health Care Management and Policy

**MENTOR:** Clark Donley (Dept. of Philosophy)