



MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT
A136 (Paulin) / S138 (Hoylman-Sigal)

Gay Men’s Health Crisis, Inc. (GMHC), the world’s first and leading provider of HIV and AIDS prevention, care, and advocacy, strongly supports the passage of A136 (Paulin) / S138 (Hoylman-Sigal); a bill that would allow terminally ill, mentally capable adults to request, obtain, and decide to ingest medication to die peacefully in their sleep should their suffering become unbearable.

The bill is modeled after the Oregon Death with Dignity Act, which has been in effect for more than 20 years without a single substantiated instance of abuse or coercion. Disability Rights Oregon, an organization committed to protecting Oregonians living with disabilities, has never received a complaint of abuse or attempted abuse under the Act.¹

As an organization that serves HIV- and AIDS-affected communities, GMHC recognizes the importance of supporting those with terminal diagnoses. Although new diagnoses of HIV in New York have decreased by 46% from 2011 to 2021, of the 103,900 individuals living with diagnosed HIV, 75% were at least 40 years of age and 57% were 50 years or older.² This population includes long-term survivors of HIV/AIDS, defined as individuals who were diagnosed prior to the advent of antiretroviral therapy in 1996.³

Many of these individuals are likely to experience consequences from untreated HIV or side effects from other comorbidities of the disease, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, and osteoporosis.⁴ These, in combination with chronic pain associated with late-stage AIDS, can lead to an immense amount of suffering as an individual approaches the end of their life. This legislation would allow individuals to die on their own terms. The opportunity to bring peace of mind to terminally ill patients by allowing them to decide for themselves how much suffering they must endure is supported by both physicians and public opinion.

Under the Medical Aid in Dying Act, terminal patients suffering needlessly are given the option to end their life peacefully. GMHC hopes to offer their compassion for any person facing a terminal diagnosis and help them obtain a peaceful death with dignity. As a result, GMHC strongly supports and recommends the passage of A136 (Paulin) / S138 (Hoylman-Sigal).

¹ Disability Rights Oregon. *Assisted Dying in Oregon: Twenty Years of Practice*. Dignity in Dying, Compassion & Choices, 2017. https://cdn.dignityindying.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ASSISTED-DYING-IN-OREGON_REPORT.pdf

² New York State Department of Health. *HIV/AIDS Annual Surveillance Report, 2021*. https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/general/statistics/annual/2021/2021_annual_surveillance_report.pdf

³ HIVinfo. “HIV Long-Term Survivors.” National Institutes of Health, Office of AIDS Research. <https://hivinfo.nih.gov/understanding-hiv/hiv-aids-awareness-days/hiv-long-term-survivors-day>

⁴ Greene, M., Justice, A. C., Lampiris, H. W., & Valcour, V. (2013). “Management of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection in Advanced Age.” *JAMA*, 309(13), 1397–1405. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2013.2963>