

PRESS RELEASE - May 2, 2002

HAWAII LEGISLATURE REJECTS ASSISTED SUICIDE

Today, May 2, 2002, the Hawaii legislature heeded the warning of their state medical, nursing, and hospice organizations about the abuses that have taken place with assisted suicide in Oregon. The Hawaii senate rejected a well orchestrated effort to pass an assisted-suicide law similar to Oregon's. Yesterday, proponents of the Hawaii assisted-suicide bill claimed a high likelihood that their legislation would pass. Instead, the bill was defeated by a vote in the Hawaii senate of 14 to 11.

Since Oregon passed its assisted-suicide law, claims by proponents that many states would soon pass similar laws have proved unfounded. The majority of state legislatures have considered the issue and all of them have rejected assisted suicide. More than a dozen states in the past 10 years have strengthened laws against assisted suicide rather than following Oregon's lead. California, Maine, Michigan and Washington have all defeated assisted-suicide referenda. Liberal state supreme courts in Florida and Alaska have rejected assisted suicide. The U.S. Supreme Court found in 1997 that there is no constitutional right to assisted suicide.

"The Hawaii legislature has done its duty. It has protected the vulnerable and disabled people who count on it to represent them," Doctor Hamilton of Physicians for Compassionate Care said. "The Hawaii legislature has duly noted the abuses already documented in Oregon and heeded their own medical, nursing, and hospice organizations to reject this dangerous, irresponsible and discriminatory law. Physicians in Hawaii know they can provide patients with the pain treatment and palliative care they need without ever resorting to assisted suicide. Hooray for Hawaii!"

All statements may be quoted as from Dr. Gregory Hamilton, spokesperson for PCC, where he is co-founder and past-president.