



*In the City Council, October 19, in the year Two Thousand and Seventeen*

*Upon the recommendation of Councilor Dennis Bidwell, Councilor William H. Dwight, Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge*

**17.409**  
**A Resolution**

**In Support of House Bill 1194 and Senate Bill 1225, the "End of Life Options Act"**

WHEREAS, the state legislature is now considering bills H. 1194 and S. 1225, the "End of Life Options Act", which if passed would make Massachusetts the seventh state in the country to allow citizens to request and receive compassionate aid in dying medication from their doctor;

WHEREAS, advances in science and technology have created medical interventions that often prolong the dying process and increase suffering; and

WHEREAS, "aid in dying" describes a medical practice defined by established standards of care in Oregon for the past 19 years and in the state of Washington for 9 years. It enables a mentally capable, terminally ill adult to obtain a prescription for medication, which the patient may choose to self-administer, in the face of unbearable suffering, to advance the time of an approaching death; and

WHEREAS, many people find significant relief in the legal right and medical means of control in bringing an end to the suffering caused by their terminal illness, and only a small minority of the adults who request a prescription for life-ending oral medication actually receive and use it; and

WHEREAS, annual reports by the Public Health Department of Oregon's implementation of the law show "no evidence of heightened risk for the elderly, women, the uninsured, people with low educational status, the poor; the physically disabled or chronically ill, minors, people with psychiatric illnesses including depression; or racial or ethnic minorities;" and

WHEREAS, many find comfort and peace of mind in having access to options at the end of life, including aid in dying, even if they do not exercise those options; and

WHEREAS, 73% of Northampton voters voted in favor of the 2012 Ballot Initiative authorizing aid in dying, and state Rep. Peter Kocot and many other legislators from western Mass. are co-sponsors of the 2017 bill called 'The End of Life Options Act'; and

WHEREAS, a 2014 public opinion poll by Purple Strategies found 70% of Massachusetts registered voters agree with the statement: The decision of a terminally ill adult to end their own life should be a private decision between the patient, their family, their faith, and their own doctor; and

WHEREAS, seven jurisdictions (Oregon, Washington, California, Montana, Colorado, Vermont, and the District of Columbia) now authorize the medical practice of aid in dying; and

WHEREAS, aid in dying would only be available to those terminally ill, mentally capable adults who have a prognosis of six months or less to live, as determined by their doctor and confirmed by a second medical doctor; and

WHEREAS, well-respected health and medical organizations recognize aid in dying as a legitimate, necessary end-of-life option for eligible adults facing an imminent death from a terminal illness, including The American Public Health Association, The American Medical Women's Association, The American Medical Student Association, The American Academy of Legal Medicine, The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association;

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts statute on "assisted suicide" is not applicable to the choice of a psychologically healthy, terminally ill individual facing end-of-life suffering, who asks his or her physician for the means to die in a humane and dignified manner;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton respects the diversity of perspectives on end-of-life decisions; and supports equal protection within the diversity of perspectives on end-of-life decisions;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton recognizes the practice of aid in dying as a desirable medical option for many terminally ill, mentally capable adults; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of Northampton hereby calls on the Massachusetts State Legislature to pass H. 1194 and S. 1225, "The End of Life Options Act"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrative Assistant to the City Council shall cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to MA Senate President Stanley C. Rosenberg, MA State Representative Peter V. Kocot, MA Speaker of the House Robert A. Deleo, and MA Governor Charles Baker.