

Pro-Death Group Pushes Physician-Assisted Suicide in Hawaii

Assisted suicide hasn't been a hot button issue in the media since the days of Dr Jack Kevorkian—at least not in the US. It hasn't, that is, until a pro-death group called Compassion and Choices started pushing its agenda.

Compassion and Choices recently and publicly began arguing that Hawaii state laws allow for physician-assisted suicide. But Hawaii's Attorney General is making it very clear that the tropical state will not turn a blind eye to the Kavorkian-style practice.

To be sure, doctor-prescribed death is illegal under Hawaii law despite what a pro-death group has argued. So says a newly authored legal opinion issued by Louie to Sen. Josh Green, M.D. According to Green, the attorney general's legal opinion states that state law “does not authorize physicians to assist terminally ill patients with dying” and “a physician who provided assistance with death could be charged under Hawaii's manslaughter statute.”

“Depressed patients need understanding and sound medical treatment, not encouragement to kill themselves. State law reflects this, and no one should believe the recent falsehoods that pro-death proponents have spread about the law. The Hawaii attorney general has clearly concluded that state law does not permit doctor-prescribed death and that any physician who participates in it can be prosecuted,” said Honolulu attorney Jim Hochberg, one of nearly 2,100 attorneys in the Alliance Defense Fund alliance.

Hochberg participated in an expert panel on physician-assisted suicide hosted Dec. 8 by Hawaii's Partnership for Appropriate

and Compassionate Care and authored a Nov. 30 column in *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser* debunking the claims of pro-death proponents about Hawaii law.

Compassion and Choices, formerly known as The Hemlock Society, attempted to argue that a 1909 law, §453-1, enacted while Hawaii was a U.S. territory and that allows for “remedial agents” to be given to patients declared “hopeless and beyond recovery” somehow means that doctors can legally prescribe lethal doses of medication to such patients.

Green informed Hochberg that the attorney general’s opinion concludes this is not the case. The opinion explains that the history of the law clearly indicates its intent to prohibit prosecution of someone whose untested techniques or materials may be able to save a patient when traditional medical practice could not. Hochberg says, “This law simply does not give doctors discretion to hasten the death of patients.”