



MALDEF

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NEWS RELEASE

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MALDEF SUPPORTS TERMINAL PATIENT'S RIGHT TO MAKE OWN END OF LIFE CHOICES

MALDEF joins campaign to win patient's end of life rights

SACRAMENTO, CA – Today, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) the nation's leading Latino legal organization, endorsed legislative efforts to secure the right of terminally ill patients to make their own end of life choices. "The California Compassionate Choices Act", AB 651 would ensure that all terminally ill patients in California have equal access to quality medical care and treatment – including a full commitment to the broad continuum of care, especially hospice and every modality of excellent palliative care.

"MALDEF has looked closely at AB 651. The legislation protects vulnerable populations while giving individual patients control of their own end of life choices," said John Trasviña, MALDEF interim President and General Counsel. "Underserved communities have not had access to quality end of life care. The legislation will afford them the opportunity to speak to their physician, in their native language, about all of their options. MALDEF supports the Compassionate Choices Act."

The Compassionate Choices Act aims to strengthen the protections for California's terminally ill, including the uninsured, by providing equal access to choices in medical care as they enter the final stage of their lives. A law similar to the Act has greatly improved end of life care in the State of Oregon, heightened the quality of end of life medical treatment, and shed light on disparities in care that currently exist.

"People of different faiths and beliefs can agree that life is sacred and should be respected and preserved as long as humanly possibly. However, we can also agree that when death is imminent, it is entirely respectful to the sanctity of life to permit a person decide for himself or herself when and how they can alleviate their pain and suffering in a dignified manner," said Dr. Rosalba Rodriguez de la Sierra, San Diego Oncologist and a leader of Physicians for Compassionate Choices, 1,500 California physicians who support aid in dying with safeguards as contained in AB 651.

MORE

Last month the California Field Poll found that California Latinos overwhelmingly support the right for terminally ill patient to have end of life choices. Sixty-five (65) percent of Latinos think terminally ill adults should be able to ask for and obtain life-ending medication. (*The Field Poll, March 2006*).

Founded in 1968, MALDEF, the nation's leading Latino legal organization, promotes and protects the rights of Latinos through advocacy, litigation, community education and outreach, leadership development, and higher education scholarships. For more information on MALDEF, please visit: www.maldef.org

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