



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 9, 2024

Family Support Institute of BC (FSI) demands urgent equity and inclusion reevaluation amid unprecedented ease of access to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) for people with disabilities

(January 9, 2024 – New Westminster, B.C.)—The Family Support Institute of BC (FSI) Board of Directors, relentless advocates for the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities and their families, issues a fervent call for an immediate equity and inclusion reevaluation of Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) law in Canada.

In an era where it has never been easier to die in Canada, FSI vehemently emphasizes the fundamental right to life for people with disabilities. This press release underscores the urgent need to prioritize quality supports that allow individuals to lead fulfilling lives, surrounded by positivity, dignity, and inclusion.

The current MAiD law, especially for individuals with disabilities not facing imminent death, demonstrates a lack of recognition of their vulnerability. FSI contends that the existing safeguards do not sufficiently protect this community, leaving them at risk in an environment where the ease of accessing MAiD may compromise their right to life.

"People with disabilities have a right to life and the quality supports that accompany it," asserts Dominic Rockall, President of FSI Board of Directors. "We are witnessing an unprecedented ease of access to end-of-life measures while the social service systems intended to support individuals are too limited, inadequate, inaccessible and unstable, jeopardizing the quality of their lives."

"The vulnerability of people with disabilities is further exacerbated by a social service system that falls short in providing consistent, high-quality support," says Angela Clancy, FSI Executive Director. "This leads to increased risk of poverty, isolation, and inadequate access to the comprehensive healthcare services they deserve." FSI maintains that these challenges underscore the urgent need for an equity-driven reassessment of the current MAiD law.

Additionally, FSI is deeply concerned about the consideration of MAiD for individuals with mental illness, expected in March 2024. This further adds to the complexity and vulnerability for many of the individuals the Family Support Institute supports, heightening our concerns as this law is passed. Our most vulnerable populations are gaining access to MAiD without adequate precautions, social services, expertise, professional supports, and wraparound social networks to consistently represent their interests and voices.

FSI advocates for:

- **Recognition of Vulnerability:** Acknowledging the unique vulnerability of people with disabilities and implementing safeguards that robustly protect their right to life
- **Stability in Social Services:** Directing urgent attention to fortify the social service systems, ensuring stability and quality support that prevents individuals with disabilities from slipping into poverty and isolation
- **Positive Relationships:** Fostering supportive and positive relationships to enhance the well-being of individuals with disabilities, emphasizing community and connection
- **Discrimination-Free Healthcare:** Ensuring that the healthcare system is free from discrimination and bias, providing equitable access to services that address the unique needs of individuals with disabilities

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This advocacy stance by FSI does not preclude people with disabilities from accessing MAiD under situations where terminal illness is present; FSI is not advocating against situations that fall under that track of the MAiD legislation.

FSI contends that the current law fails to recognize the urgency and magnitude of the challenges faced by people with disabilities. A resolute commitment to equity and inclusion is essential to safeguard their right to life and the quality supports that contribute to a meaningful existence.

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About Family Support Institute of BC:

The Family Support Institute (FSI) is an organization dedicated to advocating for the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities and their families. With a commitment to inclusivity, FSI seeks to address pressing issues affecting the disability community and work towards creating a society that prioritizes and protects the rights of all individuals.

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