

RCW 70.122.010 Legislative findings. The legislature finds that adult persons have the fundamental right to control the decisions relating to the rendering of their own health care, including the decision to have life-sustaining treatment withheld or withdrawn in instances of a terminal condition or permanent unconscious condition.

The legislature further finds that modern medical technology has made possible the artificial prolongation of human life beyond natural limits.

The legislature further finds that, in the interest of protecting individual autonomy, such prolongation of the process of dying for persons with a terminal condition or permanent unconscious condition may cause loss of patient dignity, and unnecessary pain and suffering, while providing nothing medically necessary or beneficial to the patient. The legislature further believes that physicians and nurses should not withhold or unreasonably diminish pain medication for patients in a terminal condition where the primary intent of providing such medication is to alleviate pain and maintain or increase the patient's comfort.

The legislature further finds that there exists considerable uncertainty in the medical and legal professions as to the legality of terminating the use or application of life-sustaining treatment where the patient having the capacity to make health care decisions has voluntarily evidenced a desire that such treatment be withheld or withdrawn.

In recognition of the dignity and privacy which patients have a right to expect, the legislature hereby declares that the laws of the state of Washington shall recognize the right of an adult person to make a written directive instructing such person's physician to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining treatment in the event of a terminal condition or permanent unconscious condition. The legislature also recognizes that a person's right to control his or her health care may be exercised by an authorized representative who validly holds the person's durable power of attorney for health care. [1992 c 98 s 1; 1979 c 112 s 2.]