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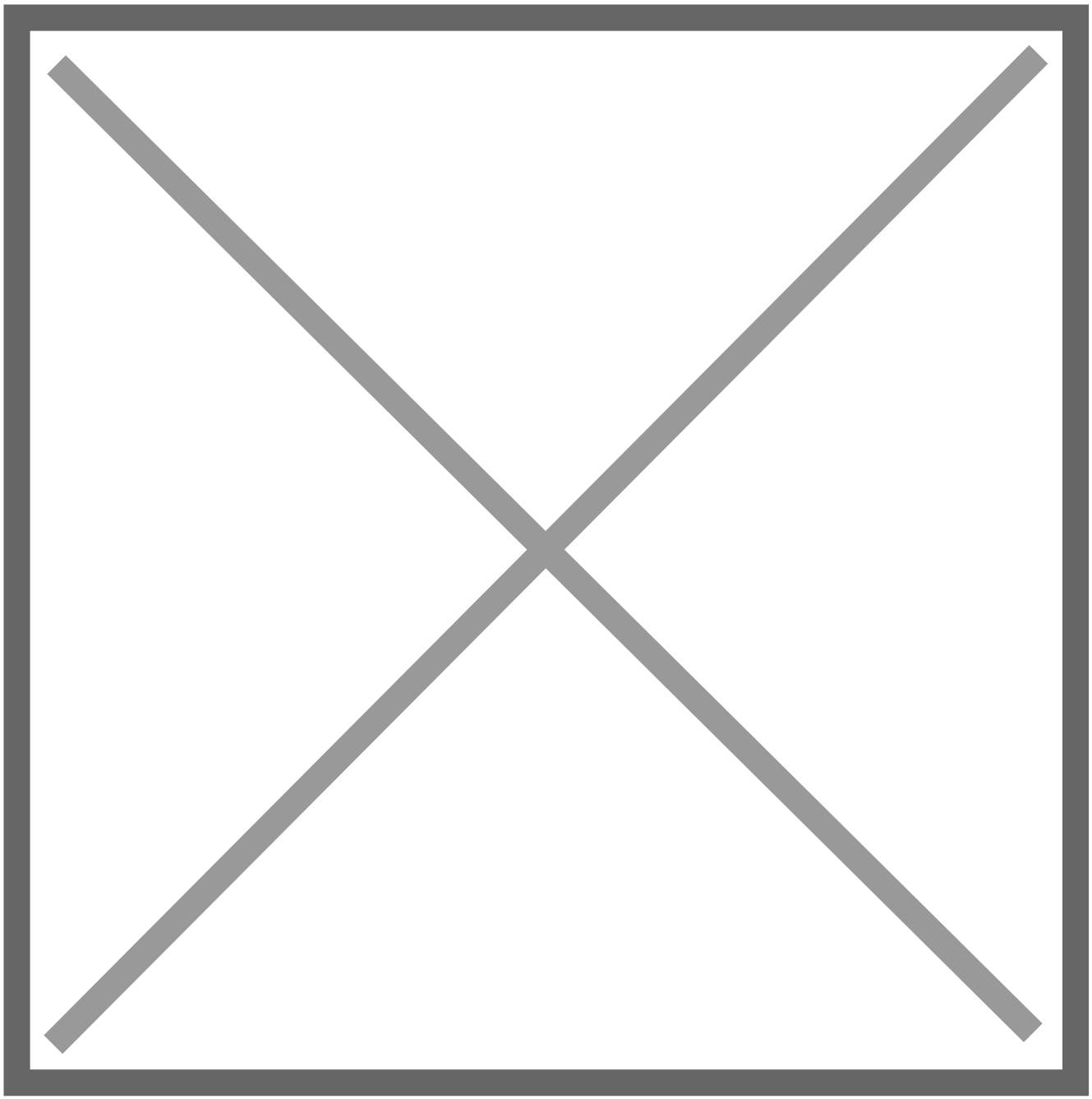

Opponents of New York state's proposed assisted suicide bill stand outside the governor's mansion in Albany Dec. 3, 2025, for a candlelight vigil urging Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Catholic, to veto the bill passed by the Legislature June 9. Hochul signed the measure into law Feb. 6, 2026. (OSV News/The Evangelist/Emily Benson)



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Albany, N.Y. — February 9, 2026
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New York Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul Feb. 6 made good on her promise that early this year she would sign a bill into law allowing physicians to aid terminally ill adults in dying by suicide.

Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have now legalized assisted suicide. Illinois became the 12th state to legalize it Dec. 12 when Gov. JB Pritzker signed that state's measure into law.

Hochul, a Catholic, had announced her plan to sign the measure in a Dec. 17 commentary in the Times Union daily newspaper in Albany, the state capital, saying she would do so once certain "guardrails" were added by the Legislature to "address the concerns of some who fear that vulnerable populations, including those with disabilities or the elderly, will be pressured into a decision they would not have made on their own."

In her announcement on making the measure law, she said she had "secured" guardrails "ensuring integrity of patient decision and preparedness of medical institutions."

New York state's Catholic bishops have stated several times that physician-assisted suicide "is in direct conflict with Catholic teaching on the sacredness and dignity of all human life from conception until natural death and is a grave moral evil on par with other direct attacks on human life."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explicitly condemns the practice of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide as "morally unacceptable" and a violation of the Fifth Commandment, "You shall not kill."

"We call on Catholics and all New Yorkers to reject physician-assisted suicide for themselves, their loved ones, and those in their care," the bishops said in a Dec. 17 statement, which reiterated longstanding Church opposition. It was released in response to Hochul's promise to make it law.

"We pray that our state turns away from its promotion of a Culture of Death and invest instead in life-affirming, compassionate hospice and palliative care, which is seriously underutilized," they said.

"Tragically, this new law will seriously undermine all of the anti-suicide and mental health care investments Governor Hochul has made through her tenure," they said. "How can any society have credibility to tell young people or people with depression that suicide is never the answer, while at the same time telling elderly and sick people that it is a compassionate choice to be celebrated?"

The "guardrails" Hochul sought that she said are now part of the law include "allowing religiously-oriented home hospice providers to opt out of offering medical aid in dying."

The law now also includes a mandatory waiting period of five days between when a prescription is written and filled; a requirement that the initial evaluation of a patient by a physician be in person and that a verbal request by the patient for help in dying be recorded by video or audio; and a mandatory mental health evaluation of the patient seeking medical aid in dying by a psychologist or psychiatrist.

It also limits the availability of medical aid in dying to New York residents and prohibits "anyone who may benefit financially from the death of a patient from being eligible to serve as a witness to the oral request or an interpreter for the patient."

"This historic bill signing comes after careful reflection and deliberation with the sponsors of the bill, advocacy organizations, and everyday New Yorkers brave enough to share their personal experiences in order to get this legislation across the finish line," said a release on Hochul signing the measure.

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"New Yorkers deserve the choice to endure less suffering, not by shortening their lives, but by shortening their deaths — I firmly believe we made the right decision," Hochul said in a statement.

The law goes into effect in six months from her signing it to allow the Department of Health to put into place regulations "to implement the law while also ensuring that health care facilities can properly prepare and train staff for compliance."

Besides the state's Catholic bishops, other Catholics and other pro-life advocates have long made their objections known to lawmakers' efforts to legalize assisted suicide, most recently with four candlelit vigils held in the bitter cold in early December.

One vigil took place Dec. 4 outside the Sen. John H. Hughes Office Building in downtown Syracuse. A second one held the same evening took place outside Hochul's office in midtown Manhattan. The evening before a vigil was held just outside the front gates of the governor's mansion in Albany, the state capital, and another one took place in Tonawanda near Buffalo in western New York.

They were organized by Chris Fadden, president of Syracuse Right to Life, in collaboration with the Albany-based New York Alliance Against Assisted Suicide. In all, more than 350 attended the four candlelight vigils.

"This is a very dangerous bill," said Dr. James Mostrom, a retired anesthesiologist from the Syracuse area. "I'm totally against it because it really compromises the physician-patient relationship. The patient can't be sure that the doctor is always working in their own interest," he told The Catholic Sun, Syracuse's diocesan news outlet, during the vigil outside the Hughes building.

He also emphasized that the American Medical Association is strongly opposed to assisted suicide. "It conflicts with our normal duties. I took an oath (that) I would do no harm. … There's no place for physicians in suicide."

Bishop Robert Brennan of Brooklyn and Auxiliary Bishop Peter Byrne of New York were among the participants in the Manhattan vigil opposing the measure.

Brennan told reporters at the vigil, "The taking of a life is the taking of a life. … In a situation like this, there is no compromise. I think we have to respond with incredible compassion, first of all — to accompany and to help people in those moments of

pain, to make those final moments of life meaningful; there are all kinds of palliative care treatments that are available."