Aggressive brain cancer is trying to end my life. The best doctors in the world are racing to find a cure. Meanwhile, legislation promoting assisted suicide all over the nation would dismantle essential protections and care on which I, and so many others, depend as we fight terminal illnesses. Bills that would legalize or expand assisted suicide have been introduced in 29 states.

Three years ago, I was living the American dream. I was happily married, our son had just turned 1, and I had a job I loved. My life changed in an instant. I had a grand mal seizure at work and went to the hospital. Doctors ran tests, including a CT scan, but could not find anything wrong. As they were preparing to send me home, my wife demanded an MRI.

That’s when they found the cancer—grade 4 glioblastoma multiforme. The neurosurgeon told me it was inoperable; my prognosis was four months to live. Three doctors told me there was nothing they could do. Surgery, chemotherapy and radiation rarely work on this type of brain cancer.

I’m a U.S. Marine Corps veteran of Iraq. I’ve been through a lot in my life and always resolved never to give up, but there was a moment after my diagnosis when I felt despair. In that moment, had assisted suicide been an option, I might have taken it. With my family’s support, I came through that depression. But not everyone is lucky enough to have that kind of support.

So despite the doctors’ pessimistic prognosis, I pursued standard and experimental treatments. I knew doctors weren’t always right and I was going to fight for every moment of life I had left. That was three years ago. Today our second child is on the way.

Sadly, too many others—thrown into clinical depression by a grim prognosis, illness-induced disability or fears of being a burden—lose hope and become willing to take their own lives. A study conducted in Oregon in 2006 found 25% of patients requesting assisted suicide were depressed, and several of them went on to receive the lethal medication.
Legislation being pushed throughout the country promotes assisted suicide for cases like mine. Instead of providing support and working to make life more comfortable, this legislation would encourage victims to choose the least expensive option—death. We cannot trust insurance companies, which are profit-driven businesses, to continue offering quality care to terminally ill patients. They will choose the cheaper option every time.

I’ve seen the danger of assisted suicide, and that is what moved me to dedicate the last year and a half to fighting assisted-suicide legislation across the country with the Patients Rights Action Fund. If suicide becomes a normal medical treatment for terminally ill patients, lives will be tragically shortened, as patients who might have outlived their prognoses by months or even years kill themselves prematurely.

Mr. Hanson is president of the Patients Rights Action Fund.