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## **TERRI SCHINDLER SCHIAVO FOUNDATION CENTER FOR HEALTH CARE ETHICS, INC. PETITIONS GOVERNOR MITT ROMNEY TO ACT IN HALEIGH POUTRE CASE**

*“Haleigh’s shocking story demonstrates the ignorance of the courts as they ‘rush to judgement’ without sufficient knowledge of the procedure to determine a persons neurological condition.”*

*~Robert Schindler Sr.*

**St. Petersburg, FL** – The **Terri Schindler Schiavo Foundation Center for Health Care Ethics, Inc.** has officially announced its intent to become involved in petitioning Governor Mitt Romney for a change in how Massachusetts regulates end-of-life decisions after a careful and thorough review of how the state handled Haleigh Poutre, an 11-year-old girl beaten into a coma while under the care of the Department of Social Services.

Poutre was declared by doctors to be “virtually brain dead,” and a court order had been approved for the removal of her respirator and feeding tube, when she began to show improvement. She is now off her respirator and breathing on her own. Poutre’s case illustrates how easy it is for a doctor to misdiagnose a patient and how little evidence is needed for a court to approve the removal of artificial life support.

In a letter to Governor Mitt Romney the Schindler family requested that, for the future well being of incapacitated persons, he petition to **open end-of-life court proceedings to the public, declassify food and water, through any means the patient can safely accept it, as medical treatment or artificial life support, increase the standard of evidence required to remove life support in cases where no written directives exist and establish special judicial panels to hear end-of-life cases.**

Having been directly involved in a legal case where medical opinions were grossly conflicting regarding a diagnosis of “permanent vegetative state” (PVS,) the Foundation recommended to Romney that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts adopt a more controlled standard of medical and neurological analysis in order for a court to consider removal of “medically necessary assistance from all persons without written directives to the contrary, but particularly from an incapacitated person at the mercy of the state’s custody.”

This is especially important given the high misdiagnosis rate of PVS (reported by the British Medical Journal in 1999 as 43% and higher) and by the fact that a PVS diagnosis is a highly subjective one. As in, Poutre’s case, the doctors’ misdiagnosis could have cost her life.

“Haleigh’s shocking story demonstrates the ignorance of the courts as they ‘rush to judgement’ without sufficient knowledge of the procedure to determine a persons neurological condition. Much more needs to be done to protect the sick and disabled from abuse, including reckless death sentences imposed by the courts,” says Bob Schindler Sr.

“It is our hope that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the federal government, and other states will consider that the case of Haleigh Poutre provides an adequate reason to act and make certain that when an innocent life hangs in the balance, where there is no written directive and where there is only the necessity to provide food and water in order to sustain that life, that the same legal protections are made available as are available for criminal death penalty cases.”

**About the Schindler Family:**

**Mary and Robert Schindler as well as Suzanne Schindler Vitadamo and Bobby Schindler now work full time for The Terri Schindler Schiavo Foundation Center for Health Care Ethics, Inc. in St. Petersburg, Florida, an organization dedicated to ensuring the rights of disabled, elderly and vulnerable citizens against care rationing, euthanasia and medical killing.**

**The Schindler family’s first book, *A Life that Matters: The Legacy of Terri Schiavo – A Lesson for Us All* was released March 27, 2006.**

**For more information or to schedule an interview with the Schindler family, please contact Amber Hildebrand at 703-879-5862 or e-mail [Amber@MaximumImpactPR.com](mailto:Amber@MaximumImpactPR.com).**

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