

Good afternoon, Chairperson Smith and members of the Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee.

My name is Scarff Downing. I live in Monkton, Maryland, in Baltimore County. I am now retired, having taught English at Baltimore City Community College for 32 years.

I traveled to Annapolis today with my wife, Carol, to speak in support of *Senate Bill 701, the End-of-Life Options Act*.

Two recent contrasting experiences in my life strongly motivate me to urge you to pass this bill. The first experience was our decision to have our elderly cat, Abbie, put to sleep. Our veterinarian confirmed that she had only a week or two to live. Worse, she would be in pain until death relieved her. In a quiet room at the vet's office, Abbie was humanely provided with a peaceful end to her life.

Contrast that with the end of life of my brother-in-law, Dan Barnes. Dan retired after decades of teaching at Ohio State University. When he became ill, he suffered for months at home. Finally, he was transported to a hospice, in pain and knowing he had only a week or two left to live. The doctors and nurses did what they could to make him comfortable, but Dan was so miserable that, with fear in his voice, he asked us, "Do you think if I stopped drinking water, I could speed this up?" I'll never forget those words. Dan was so desperate to escape his physical misery that he was willing to die of self-inflicted dehydration. What a terrible choice to have to make!

Doesn't a human being deserve the same opportunity to die with dignity that our pets do? I don't know how many years I have left to live, but I absolutely *do* know that I don't want to spend the last days of my life desperate for what the present laws prohibit: respite from pain that will only be relieved by my death. I can't imagine that you want such an end to your lives or the lives of your loved ones either.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for Maryland citizens to express their views on this important issue. I urge you to vote "Yes" on Senate Bill 701, the End-of-Life Options Act. It will provide all Marylanders with the dignity to decide how we pass from this life to whatever awaits us beyond.