



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

*Shared Voices for Liberal Religious Values in Maryland*

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### **Testimony in Support of SB 701 - End-of-Life Options Act - Richard E. Israel and Roger "Pip" Moyer Act**

**TO: Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee**

**FROM: Stephen C. Buckingham, Chair, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry  
of Maryland**

**DATE: February 28, 2020**

Unitarian Universalists (UUs) have a long and powerful history of belief and action promoting Death with Dignity legislation. Back in 1988, way ahead of its time, UU General Assembly voted a resolution stating in part:

Guided by our belief as Unitarian Universalists that human life has inherent dignity, which may be compromised when life is extended beyond the will or ability of a person to sustain that dignity; and believing that it is every person's inviolable right to determine in advance the course of action to be taken in the event that there is no reasonable expectation of recovery from extreme physical or mental disability... Unitarian Universalists [should] advocate the right to self-determination in dying, and the release from civil or criminal penalties of those who, under proper safeguards, act to honor the right of terminally ill patients to select the time of their own deaths, . . . advocate safeguards against abuses by those who would hasten death contrary to an individual's desires; and . . . inform and petition legislators to support legislation that will create legal protection for the right to die with dignity, in accordance with one's own choice.

Each of Unitarian Universalism's Seven Principles offer support for providing end of life options, allowing for individual choice. People make choices within the options available to them – that is how they craft their dignity and worth. Dignity is not a matter of surviving as long as possible, receiving supportive care (e.g., being fed or toileted when you are no longer able to do these things for yourself), or refusing supportive care (refusing to be fed when you can no longer feed yourself), being able bodied or dying "with your boots on." Dignity is achieved by doing what you can, what you choose, with the choices available to you.

Compassion leads us to offer the full range of options for end of life care and choices around dying. The full range of options includes state-of-the-art medical support provided to all (universal health care), superb hospice and palliative care, and must also include aid in dying. Compassion for others is the reason that we should make as many options as possible available at the end of life so that they, not we, should make those important, personal choices.

To advance these important shared values, we ask that you give SB 701 a favorable report.



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### Testimony in Support of SB 701 End of Life Options Act

TO: Chair William C. Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee  
FROM: Stephen L. Finner, PhD, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.  
2715 Chesterfield Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21213

DATE: February 28, 2020

Two years ago, in the spring of 2018, I was diagnosed with stage 1 lung cancer. Although the chances of survival were and are quite good for lung cancer at that stage, I wanted to be sure my sons knew about the end of life option in Vermont, where I was living at the time. I had lobbied for passage of the Death with Dignity bill there. I also had the same discussion with my primary care physician and started radiation treatment secure in the knowledge that if I learned I was not going to survive; I could choose the time of my death. Fortunately, I did not have to make that choice, and as of today I am cancer free. However, if I face a similar situation in the future, I want the same security here in Maryland that I had in Vermont, which is why I strongly support the End of Life Options Act (SB701/HB 643).

Thank you.

*Stephen Finner, PhD*

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