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Esteemed Representatives:

I thank you for your time and careful consideration of this matter. My name is Catherine Simmons, and I am coming to you as a concerned citizen.

Like everyone in this room, I too have my story. That's the thing-the unfortunate thing- that this issue unites us as humans far more than it divides us. How we deal with suffering and death shapes our lives in every action. The question you must decide- for yourselves, and for the people for whom you make decisions- is this: Is life always worthwhile, or is there a point at which it's ok to give up?

We live in a society in despair. Mental health is frighteningly low; relationships are fractured; people turn to drugs to escape. If you pass this bill to allow people to leave when life is at its most difficult, what message does that send to those who are already low? It is well known that in states where Assisted Suicide is legal, there has been a 6.3% increase in the general suicide rate, due solely to this new acceptance of suicide. In Maryland, that would equate to more than 50 additional persons taking their own lives, on top of the nearly 700 who already do yearly. Please do not add to the despair.

We humans do not live only for ourselves but are part of something bigger, greater than us, and every minute of our lives has a meaning that ripples out to affect everyone. Every minute, even- and perhaps especially- the impossibly difficult ones. Do not give up in your own lives, and do not allow the people you serve to give up. Please vote no to HB 403.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Catherine Simmons