



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

DAWN LUEDTKE
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 7

February 14, 2024

The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 403, *End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)*

Dear Chair Peña-Melnyk,

I write in support of House Bill 403, "End-of-Life Option Act - The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act." This allows adults with terminal illnesses and appropriate capacity for health care decision-making the opportunity to manage their end-of-life treatment options. As presented, House Bill 403 contains multiple guardrails and procedural steps that will ensure the individual's decision-making capacity and a system of checks and balances prior to prescribing the required medication. It also ensures that medical facilities and providers who do not want to participate in aid in dying medical care, or wish to preclude it at their facilities, may do so without penalty so long as the patient is referred for care to a provider who can assist.

I watched this bill make it through the House of Delegates in 2019, including some passionate discussion during floor debate. In my prior private practice of law, I spent five years of my career representing individuals who suffered from mesothelioma, a terminal cancer caused by asbestos. During those five years, I watched as each of my clients suffered in the final weeks of their lives and endured repeated trips to the emergency room to have fluid drained off of their lungs. They had no ability to direct when the suffering had been enough and to do so in a dignified fashion. Some of my clients chose palliative care only, while others sought aggressive chemotherapy and underwent an extrapleural pneumonectomy procedure in the hope of delaying their inevitable death from this incurable cancer. A relative of mine in Oregon [went through this](#)

[as she battled terminal cancer](#), but her husband is a vociferous advocate against end-of-life decision making that allows for aid in dying.¹

Members of this body, family members of individuals who would use the end-of-life option act's provisions, and members of the general public may disagree with the provisions of House Bill 403 and conclude it is not a viable option for themselves. This Act facilitates individual autonomy and choice in one's own medical care and treatment. Each individual has their own moral or religious philosophies that should guide them in making their choices regarding terminal illness. Passing this bill will not interfere with those choices, it simply enables an additional option for those who choose it.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge passage of House Bill 403.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dawn Luedtke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "L".

Councilmember Dawn Luedtke
District 7

cc: Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

¹ <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2014/06/23/323330486/how-a-womans-plan-to-kill-herself-helped-her-family-grieve>