

FAV HB403/SB443

Respectfully submitted by:

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I am writing to support the End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act).

I have been advised that my testimony would be more impactful if I had a personal story to tell, and in fact I do. But my personal story, of watching my niece die of breast cancer, is played over and over in most families at one time or another. In reality, it is not a personal issue, it is societal.

Having been raised as Catholic but no longer practicing, I believe the Church and others will oppose this law. Religion should be separated from the governance of the State. People would still have the choice to do what their God and church teaches them.

I support HB403 because I believe a person has the right to end pain and suffering when all hope is gone, and suffering is intolerable. Opponents' fears of coercion to end life can be resolved within the Bill with clear guidelines. A person's belief about medically assisted aid in dying (MAID) can be established as part of the medical record and reviewed with the health history at each doctor visit, by asking, "As of today, for people who are terminally ill and meet the State requirements, how do you feel about medically assisted aid in dying? Choices can be:

- I do not believe in it for myself now or ever
- I do not believe in it now but may change my mind
- I believe in medically assisted aid in dying

In this way, there could be a long history of the patient's views on record. The experience of other states can also be considered.

While some people may believe that MAID exposes vulnerable people to pressure to end their lives, I believe there are many more patients who suffer enormous psychological and emotional stress watching their families struggle physically, psychologically and financially trying to hold things together. Imagine patients' stress of seeing loved ones suffer during this final ordeal, when these patients may have worked their entire lives trying to make things better for their loved ones.

Another issue I would like to address is the belief that pain can be alleviated. Knowing the present state of our healthcare system, this is a delusion. There are few of us who can afford 24/7 care during a terminal illness. My niece was on home hospice and received one nurse visit

and 2 aide visits for a total of 8 hours per week. One hundred and sixty hours remained each week when no assistance was provided to her and her family. Understanding the healthcare system in this country and its inability to adequately address many needs, a more logical and pervasive fear should be fear of getting sick AND not being able to get care, even more so than a family member trying to coerce one to hasten death.

Eleven states already have medically assisted aid in dying laws. Please make Maryland one of these compassionate states so Maryland residents don't have to explore relocation options when faced with this personal crisis. Polls show a large majority of people would support this bill and the struggle to pass it has gone on since 2017. Please, let's end the torture and get this done!

To close, I paraphrase the words of 29-year-old Brittney Maynard who was dying of a brain cancer, "If I knew I could end it when it got too unbearable, I could enjoy the time I have left." This is not only an issue for the elderly.

Thank you for your consideration.