

House Committee, February 16, 2024

Testimony **in SUPPORT of End-of-Life Options Act-HB0403**

Dr. Cathy Larner-Beckett, 1025 Sextant Court, Annapolis, MD 21401

Delegates, thank you for your time,

My name is Dr. Cathy Larner-Beckett and I live in Heritage Harbour in Annapolis.

I am a retired special education teacher, principal, volunteer with people with disabilities, cancer survivor, person with a disability, and Catholic.

I am here to ask you to support the End-of-Life Options Act because it is the compassionate, right thing to do – to allow people with a terminal diagnosis to have some control and dignity, and the **option** for a peaceful death, at the end of their life and over 70% of Marylanders support it. This bill is **very personal** for me.

Both of my parents, were lifelong Catholics, and I watched them die more than 20 years apart. My father was in hospice, but at the end, he was in intolerable pain despite the administration of morphine. I watched as this strong man, a combat veteran, teacher, member of the DC Boxing Hall of Fame, screaming in severe pain. Those who loved him stood by, horrified, helpless to stop it, waiting, and praying, for it to end. It was intolerable for all of us, dad, and his whole family. It was a scene I will never forget and hope to never see again.

Despite being a Catholic who attended Mass at least once a week, my mother supported my advocacy for this end-of-life option prior to her death and told me she was VERY happy to hear she only had 6 months left to live. She was in hospice for a year – twice the 6 months prognosis given her. Her body did not die in the 6-month window her doctors predicted, and there was **NO quality** of life in those extra 6 long months. That time was miserable for her, and for her family, who watched her **literally** waste away. This 5-foot 7inch woman weighed **a mere 76 pounds** at her death.

Her living was not extended but her suffering, and her death, were.

Opponents of this bill use fabricated predictions of people with disabilities being coerced to use this option. Over a cumulative of more than 40 years of data from states with this option at the end of life, proves these fears are unfounded. Please do not deny all terminal Marylanders the **option** for a peaceful, dignified death. **Support the End-of-Life Options Act.**

Dr. Cathy Larner-Beckett