

**Testimony of Jaspreet Chowdhary, Senior Legislative Counsel
Compassion & Choices and Compassion & Choices Action Network
Regarding HB 403, In Support of the Maryland End of Life Option Act (The
Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)
Maryland House Health and Government Operations and Judiciary committees
February 16, 2024**

My name is Jaspreet Chowdhary. I am a Maryland resident. I grew up in Silver Spring in the Sikh community and attended Goucher College. I am now raising my children with my spouse in Rockville, Maryland.

I am also the Senior Legislative Counsel at Compassion & Choices and the Compassion & Choices Action Network. We are the nation's oldest and largest consumer-based nonprofit organization, working to improve care and expand options at life's end. We advocate for legislation to improve the quality of care for terminally ill patients and affirm their right to determine their own medical treatment options as they near the end of life.

I am here to speak in support of HB 403, the Maryland End of Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act).

Today, a few have testified or will testify about the risk medical aid in dying poses to people from marginalized communities. I understand their concerns. I became an activist by helping elders in my Sikh community navigate a complicated healthcare system in which they were often dismissed because of limited English proficiency. My peers and I became de facto translators and advocates for cultural competence and patient agency in interactions and the delivery of healthcare.

The one thing I know for sure is that you DO NOT protect vulnerable populations by limiting access to healthcare options. We all deserve access to the full breadth of legal end-of-life options including the right to choose curative or life-extending interventions, or to forgo treatments and opt for palliative care, hospice care or medical aid in dying. HB 403 is about expanding options, not dictating choice.

Decisions about death belong to the dying, and good public policy enables them to engage in open conversations with their doctors, their loved ones, and their faith or spiritual leaders about their physical and spiritual needs at the end of life. This legislation gives terminally ill people peace of mind to not worry about whether or not they are going to die a horrible death, and instead focus on the present. Participation is voluntary for patients and providers. Terminally ill individuals don't have the luxury of



endless deliberations; they need the relief that this law affords them right now. Not a single additional person will die if this legislation is enacted, but fewer will suffer.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of this important legislation, and I respectfully ask that you vote this quickly and favorably out of committee.

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The Compassion & Choices family comprises two organizations: Compassion & Choices (the 501(c)(3)), whose focus is expanding access, public education and litigation; and Compassion & Choices Action Network (the 501(c)(4)), whose focus is legislative work at the federal and state levels.

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