



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

**Testimony of Maryland Centers for Independent Living**

**OPPOSE**

House Health and Government Operations, February 16, 2024

The seven Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Maryland were established by federal law and work to ensure the civil rights and quality services of people with disabilities in Maryland. Centers for Independent Living are nonprofit disability resource and advocacy organizations located throughout Maryland operated by and for people with disabilities. CIL staff and Boards are at least 51% people with disabilities. We are part of a nationwide network which provides Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services.

The Maryland Centers for Independent Living know that all lives are worth living. HB 403, if enacted, would endanger all vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, opening the door for abuse and coercion.

HB 403, if enacted, would allow Maryland doctors to prescribe a lethal drug overdose to patients deemed to be terminally ill with less than six months to live. The range of negative possible outcomes makes this bill dangerous rather than compassionate, and it destroys dignity rather than preserving it.

If enacted, HB 403 has the potential to exploit disparities within the health care system in the most heinous way possible. Vulnerable, ill people would have the option to choose death because of feeling like a burden on family and friends rather than basing that choice on their dignity and value.

Furthermore, doctors' terminal diagnoses are speculative at best, and they are not accurately able to predict timelines, thus opening the possibility for ending life prematurely. There are no safeguards that can truly protect against the coercion and abuse of vulnerable populations that would surely occur if this bill is enacted.

The Maryland Centers for Independent Living strongly oppose HB 403 because it fails to consider the impact it would have on vulnerable populations and those living with significant illnesses.

The Maryland Centers for Independent Living strongly **opposes** HB 403 and urges an **unfavorable** report.

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