

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

TO: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair, and  
Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee and  
Luke Clippinger, Chair and Members of the Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Ashley Egan, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland  
Coordinator  
DATE: February 16, 2024

I am the Coordinator of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland. I live in Prince George's County Maryland. I am asking you to support **HB 403 - End-Of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)**, so that others don't have to spend their twilight years terrified of living.

Many have said, "everybody is just one bad death away from supporting 'End of Life Options.'" For me, it was my beloved grandmother, Bonnie Herndon. Fortunately for her, she died in her sleep years ago.... But, that was a peaceful end to almost two decades of her living in fear, not of the inevitable, but that we, who loved her so much, would force her to hold on, when she was ready to go.

My grandmother was my best friend, biggest fan and a force of nature. She buried her husband in 1995, beat cancer in 1996 and still played tennis on Tuesdays. However, in 2005, she watched the battle over Terry Schiavo, and became terrified of suffering a similar fate. It started with jokes requesting us to put her on an ice floe. She then started to stash her percocet, just in case. Her tidy home had multiple copies of her "Do Not Resuscitate" order, as per her research. Even though she was nowhere near dying, her intent was clear.

In her 80's she suffered multiple strokes. After living to see her 90's, she was in terrible pain, her memories were fleeting at best and she was ready to die. We knew her wishes, but were powerless to point her in a legal and appropriate direction. She did not live in a state that allowed her to end her life.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of ALL people. We also believe that all people deserve a say. Especially in the ways that they want to live their lives and, more importantly, the way they want to END their lives. How can we celebrate the worth of a person, while simultaneously disregarding their feelings on the quality of life they are living? And—more importantly—how can we impose our desire to keep them alive, if that life is one that does not honor their dignity? Every person looks at a situation through the prism and the lens of their life lessons and personal wisdom, we should honor that choice.

*Ashley Egan*  
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