

OPPOSED – HB403 - End of Life Option Act

Dear Members of the Health and Government Operations and Judiciary Committees,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB403, The End of Life Option Act.

While recognizing the intention to address pain and suffering, I urge you to consider the following concerns regarding assisted suicide:

1. **Reasons for Choosing Assisted Suicide:** The primary motivations for seeking assisted suicide, as observed in states where it is legal, go beyond pain and often include loss of autonomy, loss of bodily function, and feelings of being a burden on family members.
2. **Financial Incentives for Insurance Companies:** Legalizing aid in dying may create financial incentives for insurance companies and state health plans to save money by not providing costly treatments for late-stage cancer sufferers or those with degenerative conditions.
3. **Redefined "Death by Natural Causes:** The bill seeks to redefine "death by natural causes" to include assisted suicide, which has broader implications for our understanding of end-of-life care.
4. **Impact on Healthcare Providers:** Passage of this bill could change professional expectations for healthcare providers and potentially diminish the established medical standard of care.
5. **Financial Incentives for Surviving Relatives:** The legislation may create a financial incentive for surviving relatives, potentially influencing decision-making surrounding a relative's assisted suicide.

Moreover, HB403 replicates past legislation that has been viewed unfavorably by Marylanders and committees. Concerns include:

- **Lack of Safeguards:** There are insufficient safeguards to protect vulnerable populations from coercion and abuse and the primary bill proponents view even these as barriers to be eliminated in the future.
- **Inaccuracy of Terminal Diagnoses:** Doctors cannot accurately predict a 6-month terminal diagnosis, leading to potential errors in eligibility.
- **Reasons for Requesting Lethal Drugs:** Patients in states with similar laws have requested lethal drugs due to feeling like a burden on their family, rather than solely due to pain.
- **Risk of Drug Diversion:** Unused barbiturates may enter the illicit drug market, exacerbating the opioid crisis.

Additionally, considering that this year is the Year of the Military Family in Maryland, addressing the mental health crisis among veterans is crucial. Veterans, along with the elderly, ill, and disabled, deserve dignity and compassion, not assisted suicide. I fear legalizing suicide sends the exact opposite message to our veterans struggling with mental health since we know that those seeking "aid in dying" do so at a higher rate because they fear being a burden to their loved ones than they fear pain and suffering.

I am deeply concerned that the bill's proponents find the existing safeguards burdensome, raising the potential for future General Assemblies to eliminate these crucial protections.

As a citizen, I fear becoming a victim of this legislation, pressured into ending my life rather than receiving proper treatment during a vulnerable moment in my old age or following a life-limiting diagnosis.

Thank you for considering my perspective, and I urge you to issue an unfavorable report on HB403.

Sincerely,
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