

Good afternoon Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee;

My name is Irene Liebensfeld. I live with my wonderful family in Gaithersburg. I am surrounded by supportive neighbors. I've always loved life. I do not wish to die, but I don't have a choice. I am dying. I was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer in 2016. Since then, my life has been a constant battle against the progression of this disease. Only 15 percent of breast cancer patients are triple negative which is the hardest to treat. There are many targeted treatments today prolonging Metastatic Breast cancer in hormone positive patients. None of these treatments works for the TN community. For the last four years, I've been on a steady regimen of at least 9 different chemo therapies. Some slowed the progression for a time. Others didn't work at all. Steadily chemo has taken its toll on various organs while tumors have filled my lungs.

There are several ways I might die from this disease. My lungs might fill with blood, and I will drown in it. Or, and I am told this is very painful, my lungs might collapse. I am hoping for a heart attack, though my heart remains strong. What many who have never faced such a disease do not realize. That these fears cripple our desire to go on. If I knew I had an off ramp, I would fight for every good moment with my family. An off ramp would give me mental strength and a feeling power instead of powerlessness.

Recently, I had a medical procedure where I insisted on a Do Not Resuscitate order horrifying the young intern. I explained to him my fear of a painful or long, drawn out death versus dying under anesthesia and quickly. Again, I don't wish to die at least not today. But at that moment I felt I had only one way to seize control of my either painful or swift death. So, I chose swift. Of procedure went fine and the DNR was not needed.

If I knew I had an off ramp I wouldn't rush to use it. It would simply give me the peace of mind to go on fighting as long as I can and the mental strength to do it.

I appreciate all of those kind souls who beg me to believe in miracles. But I ask you, how many souls have lost their fight waiting for a cancer miracle. New drugs take time which I am running out of. You must know that euthanasia would be administered under strict guidelines with doctors, social workers, clergy, friends and family impute to know when or if it would be time to take the off ramp. I beg you, give me the peace of mind to know I won't have to needlessly suffer and that you care enough to help many avoid needless suffering and pain.

I have had close friends die from this disease. I've sat with them as their bodies filled with so much pain that all their medications could do is numb it. Unfortunately it numbed their minds as well until they weren't really all there. Pain and drugs took over. And that is the gentle way to go. Please empower the dying. Give us the choice of an off ramp. Vote yes for Senate Bill 0701. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to be heard.