
JOSEPH KITCHEN

YOUNG DEMOCRATS OF MARYLAND
PRESIDENT

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Reverend Joseph Kitchen. I grew up as the son and stepson of Baptist ministers before becoming one myself. I am the President of the Young Democrats of Maryland. I am here today to offer our support for passage of SB701.

You have likely received the official copy of our position statement earlier this session. In short, we believe this bill provides a fair and clear vision for how terminally ill patients in Maryland can decide, on their own, to end debilitating suffering and decide their own terms on dying. Others will address in more detail the protections of this bill.

I want to, as a person of faith, an ordained minister of God, a student of the Bible who holds two theology degrees, and an active member of the First Baptist Church of Glenarden, offer a different view than what I expect you will or have heard from others in this community.

Throughout this debate both last session and this year we've heard the loud voices of some in the faith community. However, what you haven't heard is the voices from all of us. In fact, recent surveys, including one from Public Policy Polling show a majority of voters support this type of legislation. This includes 65% of Catholics, 62% of Protestants, 67% of Jews, and 52% of Muslims. So, when you hear those voices please know they don't speak for people of faith.

Even more so they don't actually speak for God. There is no Biblical doctrine anyone can stand on to oppose this bill. What you will hear from those opposed to this bill won't be Biblical, it will be traditional. Don't let them confuse the two.

Sadly, in far too many of our churches we are being given a version of a vengeful, repressive God. I don't know that God. My God is loving. My God is kind. My God is compassionate. My God is freeing. My God is Liberating. He'd never bind us to unforgiving pain without a purpose other than eventual death.

Too many faith leaders, including some from my church have developed this myth that the God we serve is limited. He isn't. They will preach version of an all-knowing God who foresaw terminal illness but won't acknowledge one who would deliver solutions to the suffering.

Over the course of this hearing you will hear a lot from men and women of the cloth about the church's view. When you do ask them where was the church in the battle to expand health care that might actually avoid some, not all, of these terminal cases? Ask them where was the church busses in the fight to expand the minimum wage lifting people out of poverty so they could provide quality health insurance to their families?

Before I wrap, I just want to be clear about where we are today.

The opposition won't have scripture on their side so they will call this bill a slippery slope.

They won't have morality on their side so they will call it not normal. What actually isn't normal is dying in bone crushing pain when we know we have other options to avoid it.

They won't have the facts on their side so they will call for prayer. My Bible tells me that faith without works is dead.

It's time they don't have the legislature on their side.