

Donna Smith Testimony in Support of SB701 End of Life Option Act

Good Afternoon, My name is Donna Smith and I am the Area Campaign Director for Compassion and Choices.

I want to thank Chairman Will Smith for his leadership on this issue as a sponsor last year and as the Chair of this committee. I would also like to thank Senator Waldstreicher for sponsoring the bill this year as well as the rest of the committee members for your support in some cases and others for your robust if not misinformed debate of this issue over the years.

As campaign director it has been my job to organize and expand the supporter base, to find subject matter experts to present on this issue, to present and educate legislators and the public on Medical Aid in Dying. I thought I had done a decent job for the last 5 years.

We have built a large coalition of support
polls indicate 66% of Marylanders support this bill.

Our diverse coalition includes USM 2.5 million strong, Maryland Legislative Coalition, with over 30,000 members, ACLU 42,000 members, UU churches, 7000, American Aethist, American Humanist, UCC's Young Dems of Maryland and others

However, I have never provided testimony before today. I always thought there were so many others that needed to be heard and that it was my job to organize behind the scenes. We have the data and the statistics on our side, we have compelling stories from your constituents but unlike former years we now have supportive leadership?

We are two votes away from getting this bill passed. What else can we do?

I now realize I have not been doing my job. You see my job is to speak for those that no longer have a voice. To fight for those who cannot fight for themselves.

We have met here in this building for the last five years and every year I have lost supporters that spent their last days suffering in pain but fighting for this law. I'm sure you do not remember them but it is important for me to honor their memory and continue their fight and not let you forget who they were.

- Barbara Bergman and Dick Israel 2015
- Marlene King and her husband Pastor Eric King 2016 - Her last email to me was to remind me to remind her about an op/ed she wanted to write about supporting end of life. She was just getting out of the hospital after major surgery but told me that the journey continues and I should be encouraged and empowered she died 6 months later
- Her husband Eric who is a pastor in Baltimore testified in honor of his wife 1 year later
- David Kipping 2016
- "My David died at home on April 4th in Hospice care. During his final 2 weeks he was losing 5 lbs. per day. His normal weight for a man 5 ft. 11 in. was 142 lbs. The last time he had enough strength for me to weigh him he weighed 105 lbs. He probably weighed less than 100 at the time of death. (I weigh about 95 and I am 5'2"). "
- 2018 fellow legislator Wayne Norman
- 2019-Marci Rubin

These are only a small sampling of those we have lost we all have lost loved ones who would have loved to have this option at the end of life.

Some of them died horrible deaths, they suffered horribly at the end while we complained of the inconvenience of long hearings and hearing uncomfortable testimony. While we argued over comparatively trivial things. Some of my supporters would have begged for the duration of their suffering and their families suffering to last only 13 hours.

I lose them every year without fail. I go to memorials and send flowers to their loved ones. These are just a few. How many more will die horribly while politics get played? How many families will suffer needlessly?

I challenge you to rise above your fears and discomfort about passing this bill. The End of Life Option Act does not cause more people to die, they are already dying. It allows more people to die in peace. I urge you to pass SB701 and then go and talk to your fellow senators and convince them to pass it.