

# TERRY LIERMAN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB701 END OF LIFE OPTION ACT Feb.28 noon

Thank you, Chairman Will Smith, Sponsor Jeff Waldstreicher, and members of the JPR committee for holding this hearing on this vitally important bill.

As you have already heard from Compassion and Choices, passing this law is simply good public policy. Polls indicate that the majority of Marylanders are in support of it, and there have been no reports of undue influence since the law was enacted.

I'm here to tell my story and the story of my beloved Caroline. I married the love of my life last year on May 17, 2019, and I lost her six months later, on Nov. 23, 2019, to four terrible cancers: liver, bone, spine and colon. We were told of her diagnosis only 3 weeks before we married but that did not deter me from vowing to love and stand by her in both sickness and in health.

I spent the majority of our marriage watching my wife suffer excruciating pain as she begged me to let her die. We spent the last 4 months of her life in the hospital. Her pain level varied from at least 6 to 8 out of 10 every single day, even though she received copious amounts of painkillers.

You can imagine how upset I was that the hospital was unable to manage her pain.

The doctors knew she was going to die. Everyone knew she was going to die and told me so privately, but because this law had not been passed there was nothing more they could do to ease her suffering.

She finally went into hospice and they treated her with palliative sedation which helped some with her pain. But it still took her two long weeks to die. In the end, she chose voluntarily to stop eating and drinking, which basically amounted to her starving to death.

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No one should have to endure what she endured and what we endured along with her. Not when we have the means to end unnecessary suffering.

I promised her before she died that I would do what I could to make sure no one else suffered at the end of life like she did. At that time, I had not heard of this bill. When my daughter Brooke told me about it, I knew I had to testify and work to get this bill passed.

What purpose is served from a moral, ethical or religious perspective by forcing people to suffer terribly for the last few months of their lives if they would prefer to die peacefully?

The right to self- determination must be considered over religion when it comes to matters of State. The separation of Church and State require it.

I want to thank all the legislators who voted to pass this bill last year and encourage others to do the right thing now by supporting it. The right to die with dignity means everything to people who are suffering as we speak and to their families.

On behalf of Caroline and myself, I want to thank you.