

End of Life Testimony

Good afternoon, my name is Phillip Branner and I live in Pikesville. I come today to speak in support of SB 701.

As Delegate Shane Pendergrass has noted, “We are all just one bad death away from supporting this bill”. I could tell you of four such experiences that I’ve had, but given my two-minute time constraint, I’ll limit this to the most personal one. I got to witness my mother’s death from metastatic breast cancer when she was 49. The last two months of her life were increasingly painful, with the final three days being ones of sheer anguish – even though copious doses of morphine were administered by her caregivers. She was in such agony that her doctors considered severing nerves in her spine in order to relieve her pain. Fortunately for all, she died before that decision had to be made. Had the option for a self-administered end been available to her, I’m sure she would have chosen it before her suffering got to the stage it did.

If she had had any hope that she could continue to live, with pain and suffering reduced or eliminated, she most certainly would have done whatever was necessary to effect that result. However, she knew that she was, in fact, dying. Without legal options, she had no choice but to exist in a state of virtual torture until her disease overcame her.

For the last nearly 74 years, I have been fortunate enough to beat the odds of contracting a life-ending medical condition. As I age, I am increasingly aware that those odds grow shorter as my body deteriorates. There may come a day when a legal option for terminating my own life will be one that I would be grateful to have. I have no disagreement with anyone who would wish to not exercise such an option, for whatever reasons. I only ask that they not deny me or my loved ones that opportunity. Bluntly put, my life or death is none of their business.

I sincerely hope you will vote YES on this issue that is so close to me. Thank you.