



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 701 End of Life Options Act

TO: Chair William C. Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Ashley Egan, Coordinator, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.
7604 Lanham Lane
Fort Washington, MD 20744

DATE: February 28, 2020

My name is Ashley Egan, I am the Coordinator of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland. I am writing to ask you to support the End of Life Options Act.

Many have said, “everybody is just one bad death away from supporting ‘End of Life Options.’” For me, it was my beloved grandmother, Bonnie Herndon. Fortunately for her, she died in her sleep five years ago.... However, that was a peaceful end to almost two decades of her living in fear, not of the inevitable, but that we, who loved her so much would force her to hold on, when she was ready to go.

My grandmother was my best friend, biggest fan and a force of nature. She buried her husband in 1996, beat cancer and still played tennis on Tuesdays. However, in 2005, (three years after my husband and I moved to Camp Springs, MD) she watched the battle of Terry Schiavo and became terrified of suffering a similar fate. It started with jokes requesting us to put her on an ice flow. She then started to stash her Percocet, just in case. Her tidy home had multiple copies of her “Do Not Resuscitate” order, as per her research. Even though she was nowhere near dying, her intent was clear.

When she was in her 80's she suffered multiple strokes and dementia. After living to see her 90's, she was ready to die, we knew her wishes, but were powerless to point her in a legal and appropriate direction. Even though she literally wrote a book on aging with her gerontologist, it boiled down to one fact. She did not live in a state that allowed her to end her life.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of ALL people. We also believe that all people deserve a say. Especially in the ways that we want to live our life and, conversely, our death. How can we celebrate the worth of a person, while simultaneously disregarding their feelings on the quality of life they are living? And, more importantly, how can we impose our desire to keep them alive, if that life is one that does not honor their dignity? Every person looks at a situation through the prism and the lens of their life lessons and personal wisdom, we should honor that choice.

Ashley Egan

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland