

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
February 28th, 2020

Good afternoon, thank you for allowing me to speak in front of you. I am Edward Willard, in years past I had the honor of representing advocacy organizations for citizens with disabilities. This session, because of the wonderful phase in life called retirement I am in front of you as a private citizen of Maryland. I am also a member of the Maryland Against Assisted Suicide Coalition.

Probably most of you remember my testifying last session due to some medical professionals who devalued my life by my Cerebral Palsy I almost died the summer of 2017. Had my Mother not been in the right place at the right time, my family would have had to bury me.

Working in the disability field thirty years I know how professionals often need to use terms and terminology to soften things. That for me is no longer necessary, therefore, I will use terms that others want to sugar coat.

Last Session being my first time working on legalized euthanasia for people with disabilities, I started asking myself these types of questions. If I tell people I am in pain, will this lead to conversations about putting me down? If getting out of pain means laying me down once or twice a day, will this become a measurement of work by others? Would medical professionals question if my pain is too much for others to handle, the type of Cerebral Palsy I have does get progressive and more pain comes with that. Therefore, would doctors suggest euthanizing me would be an option? and with the new norm in Washington DC, would Medicare deem me too expensive to pay for ongoing treatment, yet for a one time cost we will pay for my euthanasia? Besides a higher risk of more hospitalizations, the need for specialized therapy and costly equipment, and having a G-tube for primary nutrition my formula itself is two thousand dollars a month. So yes, I often times get frightened for my life being ended not by my choice.

Several supporters of this bill would say there are safeguards to be put in place to avoid these dangers for citizens with disabilities. Let's be honest, there is absolutely no way to guarantee safeguards would not be gone around, or more importantly ways to monitor situations where safeguards have been ignored and gone around.

I close today by sharing in researching other states and countries in my former job. I read an article from the Netherlands, due to a gentleman who had significant mental health issues, they claimed everything was tried to help the gentleman to calm down and not be in so much distress, it was decided to end his life with medication. The most haunting and horrifying thing is, a few days before the procedure was going to happen a case manager described the setting as the gentleman sitting calmly relaxed on his couch watching television. I would venture to say the gentleman had no or little understanding of what was going to happen. But the case

manager knew and perhaps was going to be present when the procedure took place. to this day it haunts me what if the day of he was yelling and screaming, because he didn't know what was about to happen, or he knew precisely was happening. I leave you with that vision.