

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Honorable Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Member,

My name is Elizabeth Puleo and I am writing today in opposition of House Bill 643 and Senate Bill 701, both of which are titled, An Act concerning the End of Life Options Act.

Lou Gerhig, the baseball player, once said "I might have had a tough break, but I have an awful lot to live for." As you aware of ALS, also known as Lou Gerhig's disease is a disease in which one is robbed of their physical functions while still being mentally intact and resulting in death. When I was 3 years old, my dad was diagnosed with ALS and lived for almost eight years with the disease despite the fact doctors told him he only had two years to live. He didn't choose when he died but he died with dignity at home surrounded by our loving family.

Two years after his diagnosis, at age five, I developed brain cancer. Within the span of three years, I underwent two major surgeries to remove the tumor. Six weeks after my second brain surgery, the tumor grew back. Radiation was my only option for survival. I spent that summer undergoing radiation treatments, not how many seven year olds spend their summer. By that September, I started to experience side effects from the radiation. The radiation destroyed my cancer but I became physically disabled. Within four months, I could not walk, crawl or do anything on my own. Doctors told my parents, "take her home, love her, she'll be dead in a couple weeks". Unwilling to accept that prognosis, I started to receive therapy. I retaught myself to walk and how to live again. So here I am, over 20 years later and showing no sign of death anytime soon, guess those doctors were wrong.

I oppose this bill because I believe everything happens for a reason and that suffering is part of the human experience. If my dad just gave into death two years after being diagnosed, he would've never seen me struggle with cancer and conquer it. Watching him slowly deteriorate with each day was not easy but seeing him fight to the end inspired me to continue working hard and stay determined despite the obstacles I faced. At the same time, if he had chosen death, I would not have the cherished memories I do of my dad. One of my greatest memories of my dad is having to feed my dad because he could not use his hands. Just imagine, a five year old feeding her father potato chips, grease and saliva mixed on your hand. At the time, I thought it was gross but now I cherish those memories because it was our time together and something no one can take from me.

If I had chosen death and given up at age 8, I would have missed out on many wonderful things! Yes, I admit there are days when everything seems to fall apart, when life is challenging, and I struggle to see the positives but it is at those times that I keep pushing forward and remind myself that every day is a new beginning. I oppose the Physician Assisted Suicide because every life matters and we never truly know what the future holds.

For the past 6 years, I've testified against this bill. I have listened to the many arguments for it and against it. Yet my position on this bill still stands. When I'm having a bad day, my mom tells me to take a look in your rearview mirror. So many times, I focus on being a burden to those

around me and think of only my suffering, that I fail to see the perspective of others. Earlier this year, I was helping with a high school youth group. My legs were shakier than normal on that day and when I stood up to grab something, my foot failed to pick up and fell face forward into the chair in front of me. I ended up with a small cut above my eyebrow that required stitches. Thankfully that was the extent of my injuries but needless to say I was embarrassed and felt like a burden. While waiting at the ER, I wondered why things like this happen to me and how better the world would be if I took myself out of the equation. Throughout that week, my phone kept ringing with concerned messages and calls. The following Sunday, one of the high schoolers approached me, saying how much I inspire him and how me being there every week encourages him to overcome the challenges he faces. Funny thing is, I never spoke to him until that day and didn't even think he knew my name. Take a look at your rearview mirror.

There are days when I feel like a burden and I hate being physically disabled. But then there are moments like that.

Some people may say those who are disabled or terminally ill are a burden to society. When considering this bill, please keep in mind the families and friends who would be impacted by this legislation. Think of the memories of loved ones it might affect and all the good this bill might take away from our society.