

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

Dear Honorable Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Member,

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. Good afternoon. My name is Jim Dausch, and this is Jean, my wife of nearly 48 years.

This is our story:

In 2009, the neuromuscular specialists at Hopkins gave Jean a diagnosis of ALS. By late 2010, she lost the ability to speak clearly or to walk unaided. By 2011 she was using a walker then a wheelchair. After that, and following a visit to Lourdes in late summer 2010, there was no further development of the condition, and by now, the doctors believe that she may have a very rare variant of ALS called Primary Lateral Sclerosis, which cripples and affects speech but doesn't kill. However, there is no way to test for this. ALS has been known to go into prolonged remission and then come back. For us, the challenge and uncertainty remain.

At the Hopkins ALS Clinic, we learned of the palliative measures, devices, services and support that would be available to enable us to meet the challenges that lay ahead. When we got the initial diagnosis in 2009, Jean said to me "I'm not scared and I don't want you to be." We agreed that, whatever was coming, we'd go through it together, and for me, that also included the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. The last 11 years, despite everything, have been the closest in our marriage. The support of family and friends, and of the dedicated Hopkins professionals, has been helpful beyond words. The idea of suicide, to avoid the ravages of ALS, never entered the picture. Life, even with ALS, is too precious.