

Testimony to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Re: Senate Bill 701—"End of Life Options Act"
Friday, February 28, 2020

OPPOSE

Mr. Chairman, Senators, and fellow citizens, I am here today to oppose Senate Bill 701, the "End of Life Options Act".

Hello, my name is Sheryl Grossman. I come before you today, as I have before, to urge you to oppose SB 701, the End of Life Options bill.

As someone born with a very rare genetic condition, who meets the criteria for "terminal" under this bill, I am telling you this bill is harmful to disabled people.

When the average person on the street says they want to harm themselves, we rush crisis intervention services and follow up mental health care to them. Why should people who are labeled as having 6 months or less to live be treated differently? Why? Because this bill buys into the age-old notion that a life with limitations is less worthy of life.

We know that the top two reasons that people request a lethal prescription are the fear of loss of function and the fear of being a burden physically and financially on others. Add to that the health disparities that exist for many disabled and multiply marginalized people and we get a perfect storm where the cost cutting of insurance companies in the form of denied coverage meets the stereotypes that lead us disabled folks to believe that assisted suicide is a viable choice, sometimes, the only option.

This bill does not do anything to protect people from being coerced into making this decision. It requires a consultation with a physician, but if they get someone like the psychiatrist I had who actually suggested turning up my pain meds, or turning off the chemotherapy because she just didn't understand why I would want to keep living in and out of hospitals for the rest of my life, then it is hard to make a different decision. And one of the bill's star witnesses last year, Dr. Strauss, testified that it is possible that a caregiver can put the meds in someone's drink. There is no requirement that the physician be present when the dose is taken. And the cause of death is listed is the underlying disease process, not the actual cause of death, assisted suicide.

Maryland is the home of Johns Hopkins, one of the best medical systems in the US. and people come here and like me, move to Maryland, for the life saving care it provides. The state of Maryland should be in the business of helping save our lives, so please, kill this bill, don't make it easier to kill us. Thank you.

I am including a list of Disability Organizations that oppose physician-assisted suicide:

<https://notdeadyet.org/disability-groups-opposed-to-assisted-suicide-laws>

Additionally, please see this link to a study put out recently by the National Council on

Disability: https://ncd.gov/sites/default/files/NCD_Assisted_Suicide_Report_508.pdf