

Testimony SB0824: Health Advance Care Planning and Advance Directives

Senate Finance Committee  
Senator Kramer

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

As an emergency physician who has been on the front lines since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am acutely aware of the challenges that have confronted families and healthcare workers around the nation. As a Black woman and physician with a background in bioethics, I have long been passionate about advance care planning (ACP) and this pandemic has highlighted its supreme importance. I work at University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center, which serves a patient base that is largely African American, a community that is even less likely than the general population to have ACP. Too often, patients arrive at the ED in respiratory distress or acutely ill and cannot speak for themselves. My colleagues and I have to scramble to piece together information about their medical history and who to speak to about interventions that they might need. It is even more difficult to ask a family member to make a decision about placing a breathing tube or resuscitating a loved one when they haven't had any conversations with them about their wishes. It is essential that everyone thinks carefully about what matters most to them in life and how this would be affected if they became deathly ill or injured.

I am passionate about this issue and recently did a [TEDx talk](#) that best summarizes why now more than ever is a time that everyone needs an advance care plan. This COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that the time for us to prepare for worst case scenarios is long overdue. I offer a unique lens as a physician who has been thinking about these issues for years and has been working in the trenches for months, calling the time of death for many who have succumbed to COVID-19 and other ailments. I've also had the experience of giving birth during this tumultuous and unpredictable time. I worked on the front lines pregnant through the first wave and my daughter was born in May 2020. I understand why people are scared and why this is a tough topic to address at any time. That said, the issue of advance care planning has been overlooked for too long. I strongly support SB0824 which will help to provide tools for Marylanders to have an electronic advance directive. This is integral to them having a voice in their care and physicians like me giving the best care possible.

Please consider watching the [TEDx talk](#) and supporting this bill.

Sincerely,

Dr. Clayborne

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