

To: All Members of the Maryland House of Delegates' Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: March 6, 2023

As lifelong Maryland residents, and lifelong Maryland residents, we are urging you to support the proposed HB 933 and SB 845 --End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane Pendergrass Act; previously the Richard E. Israel and Roger "Pip" Moyer Act). Indeed, as it is in multiple states and Washington, D.C., this bill should be identified as a "death with dignity" bill.

While we absolutely agree that life is precious, legal-age adult Maryland citizens with terminal illnesses should be allowed to end their lives. This bill respects the personal freedom that a terminally-ill person should have to control his or her own body without government interference. As noted in the past, when pain and fear intensify at the end of one's life, a person should be able to opt to die peacefully and painlessly.

The bills have been carefully written to provide terminally ill patients considering all their end-of-life options with the right to end their agony and suffering and choose the timing of their death, while protecting potentially vulnerable populations. The patient must meet certain criteria and follow specific steps to be able to request to participate in the Act, As examples only: under the bill, a patient would have to consult with a doctor multiple times — once in private to discuss their diagnosis, prognosis, options, etc.; require a written request for aid in dying to be in a specified form; a physician--or two physicians-- would have to determine that the terminally-ill patient has less than six months to live, is capable of making sound judgments and can administer the lethal medication him- or herself. Also, participating physicians/pharmacists who prescribe the lethal drugs must be protected under the law.

Furthermore, we ask that you please act to ensure that a decision to end one's life under a "death with dignity" law" would have no effect on life, health, or other financial policies.

These bills provide the *terminally-ill* person with the decision-making power to decide when and how they die. The End-of-Life Option Act adopts a thoughtful and deliberate multiple-step approach that empowers the patient, includes multiple medical professionals, and safeguards vulnerable Marylanders. The experience from other states demonstrates how Maryland can implement this option in a safe and effective manner, and prevent abuse and coercion. Death with dignity is a humane, dignified, and compassionate option to hasten the death of terminally-ill Marylanders—to stop their suffering for those that meet the criteria. We wholeheartedly urge you to support this bill.

**Sincerely,
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