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March 12, 2023

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair, Judiciary Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: Disingenuous and Misleading Letter Sent by Maryland Psychiatric Society Regarding My Testimony Favorable to HB933

Dear Delegates Peña-Melnyk and Clippinger:

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before your committees on March 10th. I am writing now in response to a letter sent to you by the Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) claiming that my testimony was inaccurate and inflated. **I am outraged and strongly disagree with that claim.**

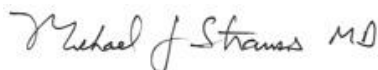
Attached are two pages from the MPS member survey conducted last May and which, I understand, has been withheld from most of its members. The relevant statement in the survey is “Physicians should be allowed to prescribe lethal medications to these patients,” with a defined patient population as having capacity and a terminal condition. In its letter to you, **MPS disingenuously failed to disclose the “somewhat agree more than I disagree” responses** in an obvious effort to discredit and mischaracterize my testimony. The attachment shows that the sum of the number of respondents who “agree” and “somewhat agree” is 57%. Analysts often combine results of two categories in such Likert scales. The number opposed is 38%, which was also in my testimony. For another question about a person having the right to end their life, MPS cited a figure of 47.7% agree but again failed to disclose the category of “somewhat agree.” The combined percentage of those who “agree” and those who “somewhat agree” is an overwhelming 76.44% in response to that question.

MPS failed to comment on testimony from Dr. Heinrichs, a member of MPS and its legislative committee. He also provided testimony to the Committee that 57% of MPS members support aid in dying.

As further background, you should know that the MPS results as I summarized are nearly identical to results of other **physician surveys showing majority support for medical aid in dying** (58% in MedChi, 60% in Massachusetts, 56% in Colorado, and 57% in a nationwide survey by Medscape).

Finally, in my experience with many professional organizations, a survey with 175 respondents (23% of members) is very good in a professional society. The results provide the best measure of MPS opinion on this matter. It is curious that MPS leadership chose to oppose HB933 while conveniently ignoring its own survey in this matter.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Strauss, MD, MPH

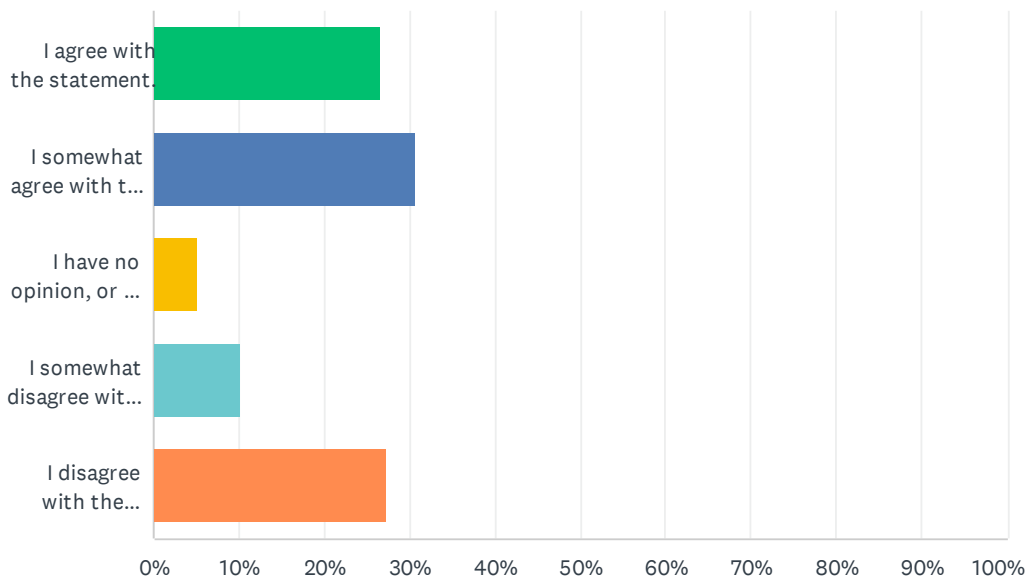
cc: Members of Health and Government Operations and Judiciary Committees

The next three questions pertain to a competent person with a terminal condition who has significant pain, suffering and/or functional deterioration, despite adequate treatment.

Terminal condition means an incurable condition caused by injury, disease, or illness which, to a reasonable degree of medical certainty, makes death imminent and from which, despite the application of life-sustaining procedures, there can be no recovery.

Q2 Physicians should be allowed to prescribe lethal medication to these patients.

Answered: 176 Skipped: 0



Sum of "agree" and "somewhat agree" equals 57.38%

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I agree with the statement.	26.70%	47
I somewhat agree with the statement, more than I disagree.	30.68%	54
I have no opinion, or do not lean in either direction.	5.11%	9
I somewhat disagree with the statement, more than I agree.	10.23%	18
I disagree with the statement.	27.27%	48
TOTAL		176

Sum of "disagree" and "somewhat disagree" equals 37.5%