



Hospice & Palliative Care Network
OF MARYLAND

Letter of Information

SB845/HB933: End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act

Contact: Peggy Funk, Executive Director 410.891.5741

SB845/HB933 End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act), were recently introduced to the Maryland legislature. After discussion, the consensus of the HPCNM Board of Directors is that **the Network takes no position on this bill. However, HPCNM offers the following information concerning this proposed legislation:**

- ***Patients facing life-limiting illness and their families need honest information about prognosis early and frequently after their diagnosis.*** Armed with adequate information, patients have more access and choices for better pain management, palliative care, and enrollment in hospice. Patients are always encouraged to document their wishes to ensure their end-of-life decisions are well-known.
- ***Hospice care provides terminally ill patients and their families with compassion, comfort, and security that can replace suffering, desperation, and loneliness.*** With timely hospice referrals, hospice can afford patients and their families the opportunity of reducing physical and emotional pain while making tender memories. Much individual growth and love can occur in the last months of life when symptoms are controlled and support is present, providing death with dignity for patients and closure for grieving families. However, fewer than half of eligible patients receive hospice care, and a third of those that do are referred in their final days of life-too late to enjoy many of the benefits of comfort, emotional counseling, volunteer friendship and spiritual care.
- ***A cultural shift needs to happen that emphasizes hospice care as “Affirming Life”.*** Hospice is not “brink of death”, or “when there is no hope” care. Patients redefine hope for themselves when they have honest information, realistic expectations, and the compassionate support of a team of professionals who are experts in relieving distress.
- ***Hospice and palliative care professionals believe in respect for patient decisions.*** It is not our job to judge a legal decision that a patient makes regarding how they want their life to end. Hospice and palliative care professionals provide expert physical, emotional and spiritual symptom management and relief with all available means, but never through intentional hastening or causing of death.

About Hospice & Palliative Care Network of Maryland (HPCNM)

HPCNM is a membership organization that includes hospice providers and palliative care partners across the state of Maryland. Our mission is to lead and advance quality hospice and palliative care by serving as an advocate and resource for all Marylanders. Empowering palliative care and hospice services, together we deliver comfort, resources and dignity to families during a poignant time – at the end-of-life. In 2022, Hospice providers served over 24,000 patients in the state of Maryland.