

HB933 – End of Life Option Act

Unfavorable

Alexandra Rak

Dear Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

I am writing to express my concern about HB933, the End of Life Option Bill. This legislation has been introduced on numerous occasions and has shown to be flawed time and time again. The bill, which would allow a person with a terminal diagnosis to seek a prescription for a lethal barbiturate and end their life is nearly identical to the past four that have all been viewed unfavorably by Marylanders and the committees which have heard testimony:

- There are no safeguards that can truly protect against the coercion and abuse of vulnerable populations.
- There is no legislative solution to the fact that doctors cannot accurately predict a 6 month terminal diagnosis.
- There is no way to cover up in legislation that patients in states where this is legal are requesting the lethal drugs because they feel like they are a burden on their families, not because they are in pain.
- We know that dangerous prescription drugs can end up on the street, and this would release hundreds or thousands of unused barbiturates into an already opioid-crises-stricken population.
- Real people have been denied access to cancer treatment because insurance companies have created policies that will cover a cheap lethal prescription for a late-stage cancer sufferer, but deny more expensive and life-lengthening chemo or radiation in states where "Death with Dignity" is legal.

In the Fall of 2019, my grandmother died of natural causes after a few months in the local Hospice. For the decade preceding her death, she received the dignified care of her children who all took turns caring for her daily needs rather than place her in assisted-living or a skilled nursing facility due to her anxiety in those facilities. When she left this world, she was holding the hand of my mother, surrounded by love and support. She never knew pressure or coercion to "opt out" early for the crime of "being a burden" on her loved ones. I pray that no Marylander is ever faced with that pressure.

It is an unfortunate reality that end-of-life care is prohibitively expensive at times. One must become completely insolvent to have Medicaid/Medicare pay for skilled nursing care. The way we treat the elderly and dying in this country, and our own state, is appalling. Given all of that, I do not believe killing our most vulnerable is the solution. I want real solutions for the sick and suffering. I would like to see the Medicaid/Medicare rules reformed. I'd like to see more research for cancer and other killer diseases. But creating a healthcare system which kills will not bring about any of these changes that we so desperately need.

I implore you to oppose HB933 and work toward real solutions for the elderly, sick, and disabled.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Rak

Charles County, MD