

Oppose HB 933 / SB 845

Laura Jones - The Dignity Mandate - 410-246-5166

It is not about who this law would help. It is about who this law will harm.

Since 2016, my husband and I testified against the End of Life Option Act because assisted suicide would put our loved ones in danger. Our daughter had once planned to end her life by overdosing and we kept all our medications under lock and key. When we testified, we only had time for part of our story but today I want to share with you more.

We talk about my father-in-law the documentary we created about the Maryland Bill. You can see it on our website – www.TheDignityMandate.org/documentary Tom was on vacation in Canada when we went to the emergency room for a 104 degree fever. They discovered he had a cancerous tumor on his pancreas. **He was given 6 months to live by the doctor who said his cancer had spread to his liver.** When I asked to see where the cancer was on his liver, the doctor pulled out the film and looked at it in more detail and said, “Oh, I have egg on my face, it has not spread to the liver, but he still only has 6 months to live.”

Canada is not known for good healthcare, so we sought a second opinion and discovered his cancer had not spread and he qualified for a Whipple Procedure that was very invasive and was more likely to kill him than save him. He went ahead with the surgery, and, **against all odds, he lived another 10 years cancer free.** Insurance companies have denied coverage of medical treatments in favor of inexpensive lethal drugs in Oregon and California.

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/oct/20/assisted-suicide-lawprompts-insurance-company-den/>

How will medical surgeries like the Whipple procedure ever be perfected if they are no longer covered by insurance? **The lethal pills will always be the most inexpensive form of treatment.** It usually stops the disease dead in it's tracks. I say usually, because the 2021 Oregon Report states one person who took the lethal drugs to die, regained consciousness. (page 13 complications)

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PROVIDERPARTNERRESOURCES/EVALUATIONRESEARCH/DEATHWITHDIGNITYACT/Documents/year24.pdf>

After a decade of living cancer free, my father-in-law developed a different form of Pancreatic cancer. He lived another 1 ½ years before at trip to the emergency room because of shortness of breath brought him face to face with the doctor who set him up to die early.

Dying early, before your time, may be the worst type of death. My father-in-law, Tom, died this way, and it was not his will to die. He wanted to live.

The doctor offered to put in a pacemaker to “help” my father-in-law. He said it would be a very simple procedure. After the surgery, we waited for 2 days in intensive care for the doctor to come to the room and answer our questions. As chance would have it, I ran into the doctor leaving the hospital cafeteria.

When I questioned him as to why he had not come back see my father-in-law, he said, **“Your father-in-law was a sick man. He was going to die anyway.”** I asked, “Why did you put a pacemaker in him then?” - and he walked away without answering me. He never came back to see him or talk to us.

What a sham and a shame for a doctor to treat a cancer hero with such disdain. My father-in-law died the next day. It was the day we were scheduled to take him home to be on hospice. It was the day before his birthday. Our children never got to say good-bye because they were not allowed in the hospital. This callous doctor robbed us of our last family birthday together. **This is the day I stopped trusting doctors.**

This doctor did not know my father-in-law. He did not care that he was a cancer survivor. All he saw was a man on borrowed time. He thought, if he dies, it will not matter – “he was going to die anyway”.

This is the mentality of the proponents of this bill. They think you can kill yourself when your terminally ill, and it is not suicide, because you are going to die anyway. **I believe the last 6 month of your life will be some of the most poignant moments of your life. They should not be discarded as meaningless.**

If you pass this law, you give doctors the right to work below the expected ethical standards of the profession. **Some doctors have preconceived notions about their patient’s quality of life** and this law would empower doctors to advocate for their patient’s death. Their professional counsel is influential to a patient relying on them for help in making the right decisions, especially when their time left to live is limited.

Maybe the law would not force any doctor to do it, but it does expect some doctors to fulfill the duties of the law. This will erode the trust and confidence we have in all doctors, because **everyone will always wonder if they are dealing with a “death” doctor.**

This law will change the way we all face death. We will face new pressures. Once assisted suicide is legal, the door will be open for anyone to suggest we end our life early. **We will have to believe we deserve to live, even when others do not see a reason for us to go on fighting.** It will make it even harder to endure to the end.

It will change the professional expectations of people in a broad range of professions, including doctors, hospice care givers, assisted living care givers, coroners, insurance agents, psychiatrists, psychologist, pharmacists and many more.

This law would open the door to so much harm to the medical profession and the patients they serve. Let's be clear, the harm we are talking about is the untimely deaths of people we love.

Please give HB 933/ SB 845 an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,
Laura Jones

Annapolis, MD

410-246-5561

laura.jones@thedignitymandate.org