

SB845/HB933
End of Life Option Act – Oppose

I am a resident of Ellicott City, a wife and mother of 5, and a nurse of 37 years. I am writing to urge an unfavorable opinion on SB845 which would allow a doctor to provide lethal doses of pills to a patient. There are many serious reasons why this bill would be tragically harmful to Maryland.

We all want to alleviate suffering. In healthcare today, there is no reason for anyone with a terminal illness to be in pain. But there is little we can do to end the cascade of pain *after* a suicide occurs, whether it was legal or not. When someone takes his own life, it is devastating to a family and a community. They suffer for generations. Families feel guilt that they were either unaware of the patient's despair, or unable to help. The ramifications of their suicide on a family can be a far greater burden than their illness was while alive. We know from studies in Oregon that the primary reason for PAS is that the patient feels they are a burden, not because they want to end their own pain. It is therefore a selfish solution on our part, who should be caring for this person. How many souls who died by physician assisted suicide may have lived the full life they were meant to live if they had had a moment of hope - a call from a friend or a caregiver's touch? We know that 30% of patients prescribed these drugs do change their minds.

This bill makes suicide too accessible, too easy, and too acceptable. Life expectancy is too difficult to determine (so many people have stories of loved ones who far out-lived their prognosis.) Depression will not be adequately evaluated or treated (doctors will not know patients well, as there will only be a few in the state willing to prescribe death, and patients will seek them out.) Families won't be notified (they may have been able to help the patient.) No one witnesses the ingestion of pills (Patients could suffer terribly from vomiting, seizing, and respiratory depression.) This is not an end of life that is peaceful, dignified, or compassionate.

In addition, do we want to be responsible for an *increased rate of suicide* among healthy people in Maryland? Historically this is what happens. The passage of SB845 will send a strong message to young people that suicide is a morally acceptable choice. This translates to more suffering for Maryland families. Suicide

is the leading cause of death of 15 to 24 year olds. They are struggling to find value and purpose in life and need support, not further justification for acting upon despair. Why would we want to enact any bill that would further endanger our vulnerable citizens and our fragile youth when suicide, drug overdoses and crime are already rampant in our state?

It will also destroy the doctor/patient relationship. Who will trust that their doctor is really striving to extend their life when PAS is an easier, cheaper solution.

House bill SB845 would potentially enable horribly wrong, hurtful, fatal decisions. Let's do better in Maryland with treating the living, and support families and communities in caring for the sick both physically and emotionally. Death is too permanent and painful to get wrong.