

Legalizing assisted suicide, also referred to as medical aid in dying, will result in the coercion, endangerment and unnecessary death of too many Maryland residents with disabilities. I urge you to vote NO on SB 845.

Disabled people have been warning against the dangers of assisted suicide for decades. Reputable, secular, nonpartisan disability rights organizations such as the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, the National Council on Disability, the American Association of People with Disabilities, and many more publicly oppose the legalization of assisted suicide.

In the eyes of the state, everyone must be seen as having equal dignity, which legal assisted suicide undermines by promoting the idea that suicidality among disabled people is rational. Maryland policy should champion fully funded home and community-based services, for a caring society rooted in mutual aid and interdependence. Sick and disabled people need more resources to live, not more resources to die.

Assisted suicide laws lead to the denial of suicide prevention services to seriously ill and disabled people, a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act's guarantee of equal program access. Assisted suicide laws redefine depression and feeling like a burden as "rational," rather than as evidence of impairment or need for intervention, as they would be for a non-disabled person. This means that sick and disabled people living with depression may be encouraged to consider assisted suicide under the same conditions that a non-disabled person would be offered mental health resources. Additionally, overall rates of suicide have been shown to increase in places where assisted suicide is legal, a phenomenon referred to as "suicide contagion".

In conclusion, legalizing assisted suicide in Maryland will further endanger the lives of an already vulnerable population. No amount of "safeguards" in the bill will protect disabled residents from dying prematurely if assisted suicide becomes legal in our cost-conscious healthcare system. I urge you to do everything in your power to prevent this bill from passing.