



**Statement of Support: Senate Bill 845
End-of-Life Option Act**

**To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Eric Blitz, Chair of the Libertarian Party of Maryland**

March 6, 2023

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, Members of the Committee:

The Libertarian Party of Maryland supports passage of SB 845. Competent individuals should have the power to control their own bodies and lives, including the medical care they undertake in support of both. For terminally ill patients with a prognosis of less than six months to live, this right of self-determination includes the choice to take medicine to end their life in a dignified manner and thus determine for themselves how best to manage the process of dying. We ask that you respect the individual's autonomy and right of self-determination by removing the legal prohibition against medical professionals and facilities assisting a patient to make a choice that empowers them to tailor their care to their particular circumstances. The individual patient is best situated to make their own moral and intellectual choices concerning their death and to choose medical care that protects their personal dignity. We also commend the law's protection of the doctors and medical facilities' choice to participate or not, which respects their autonomy to make their own ethical and professional choices.

Not everyone will make the same choices in medical care at the end of our lives. Some have moral objections to the choice this bill would protect and they should always be free to act in accordance with their moral conclusions. However, the law should not adopt one group's moral conclusions by prohibiting the choice of those who reach different conclusions. Opponents characterize the choice as suicide rather than a medical response to an existing terminal illness, ignoring the substantive differences in causation and intent.

Maryland and federal law have a long history of being most protective of individual control and choice in the area of our medical care, in light of the inherently personal and individual nature of the decisions we make about our mind and bodies. The law protects our right to control such decisions, including the right to refuse medical treatment. This includes the already recognized legal right to withhold food and water with the informed knowledge and consent that it will lead to the patient's death. The law protects the privacy of our medical information and treatment, in order to protect our autonomy and power of choice. The law protects our right of informed consent in our

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relationship with doctors, to protect our autonomy and power of choice. Our death is the single most personal event of our lives. While our death may impact our friends and loved ones, it remains our death and unlike our birth, we are capable of understanding its gravity and consequences. For this reason, the law should be most protective of individual choice over the circumstances of our death. This includes the medical care we receive as we approach that death.

This bill strikes a careful balance by removing the legal prohibition limiting patient choice in their medical care while also creating a process to protect the patient's choice to ensure it is informed, truly consensual and not the result of coercion, undue influence or duress. It protects the choices of doctors and medical facilities to offer such medical services. It respects life by confirming that it is we, as individuals, who are in control of our lives and our personal evaluation of the quality of that life when facing imminent death from a terminal illness.

On behalf of the Libertarian Party of Maryland, I ask for a favorable report from the committee on SB 845.

Sincerely,

/s

Eric Blitz, Chair
Libertarian Party of Maryland