

**TESTIMONY FOR SB0845**

**SB0845**

**Title: End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)**

**Bill Sponsored by: Senators Waldstreicher, Kagan, King, West, Lam, Hettleman, Elfreth, Zucker, Smith, Lewis Young, Kramer, Feldman, and Guzzone**

**Committee:** Judicial Proceedings

**Organization Submitting:** Lower Shore Progressive Caucus

**Person Submitting:** Marie Velong

**Position:** FAVORABLE

Honorable Committee Members:

I am submitting this testimony in favor of **End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)** on behalf of the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus. The Caucus is a political and activist organization on the Eastern Shore, unaffiliated with any political party, committed to empowering working people by building a Progressive Movement.

I am writing today in support of the *End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)* to authorize medical aid in dying in our state. I would strongly encourage the committee to vote for this compassionate option that would allow a terminally ill, mentally capable adult with six months or less to live, the choice to receive a prescription for self-ingested medication enabling a peaceful, pain-free death.

I would like to tell you why I feel so strongly about this issue. My husband died of cancer in 1974. He left us at the age of 25. I was 26 and we had two children ages 4 and 5. It was without a doubt the most devastating experience of our lives. He was sick for only ten months and would not have been eligible for this compassionate choice. It was just the beginning of chemotherapy and by the time they even figured out he had cancer he was too weak for a biopsy. They guessed at the type of cancer and treatment he needed. They had told us to prepare for his imminent

demise. One thing I do remember was at one point during this time, they cut back on his pain medication because they were afraid he would become addicted. I was perplexed by this as it seemed irrelevant if they were expecting him to die. I tell you this because that is how I feel about the objections to this bill.

The method and time period is spelled out for a person who is diagnosed by two doctors to have six months, at best, to live. All of the objections to this bill are irrelevant, when that is taken into consideration. If two doctors are wrong, then we have more problems for you to be concerned about than a person who is in pain and has no future. You need to start looking at the medical profession. This bill is giving this person the *option* to end their life in a purposeful way with some semblance of dignity and grace. Whether they use that *option* is their decision, and should be no one else's.

My children and I were exposed to death at a young age. His death, of course, was only the beginning of our experience with death and dying. In my 75 years of life, I have helped many of my pets to achieve a pain-free death because of the distress they were currently in. When I had to watch my husband, mother and other people I cared about die in so much pain, I could not understand why we can show so much compassion to our animals and not to the people we love. Even convicts on death row get more consideration during their execution. We should at least have the *option or choice* for a better death. People can choose when and how they will give birth, why can't they choose when and how they themselves can leave this earth?

By supporting the *Maryland End of Life Option Act*, I hope my home state is the next to join ten states and the District of Columbia in authorizing medical aid in dying. Thank you for representing me, The Lower Shore Progressive Caucus and others in this state. I truly hope you will vote **Favorable** on this bill that is so vitally important to me and our organization.