



SB845— End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)

Oppose

Testimony of Maryland Centers for Independent Living

Senate Judicial Proceedings, March 7, 2023

The seven Centers for Independent Living (CIL) were established by federal law and work to ensure the civil rights and quality services of people with disabilities in Maryland. Centers for Independent Living are nonprofit disability resource and advocacy organizations located throughout Maryland operated by and for people with disabilities. CIL staff and Boards are at least 51% people with disabilities. We are part of a nationwide network which provides Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services.

The Maryland Centers for Independent Living know that all lives are worth living. If legalized, this bill would endanger all vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, opening the door for abuse and coercion. It would allow Maryland doctors to prescribe a lethal drug overdose to patients deemed to be terminally ill with less than six months to live. The range on negative possible outcomes makes this bill dangerous rather than compassionate, and it destroys dignity rather than preserving it. It has the potential for exploiting the disparities within our healthcare system in the most heinous way imaginable. Vulnerable, ill people would have the option to choose death because of feeling like a burden on family, friends, and support rather than basing that choice on their dignity and value. Doctors' terminal diagnoses are hypotheses at best, and they are not accurately able to predict timelines, thus opening the possibility for ending life prematurely. There are no safeguards that can truly protect against the coercion and abuse of vulnerable populations that would surely occur if this bill is passed. The Maryland Centers for Independent Living do not support this bill because it fails to consider the impact it would have on vulnerable populations and those living with various illnesses.

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