



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

DAWN LUEDTKE
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 7

March 7, 2023

The Honorable Senator William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

SUBJECT: Support SB 845

Dear Senator Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I write in support of Senate Bill 845, "The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass End-of-Life Option Act." This allows adults with terminal illnesses and appropriate capacity for health care decision-making the opportunity to manage their end-of-life treatment options. As presented, Senate Bill 845 contains multiple guardrails and procedural steps that will ensure the individual's decision-making capacity and a system of checks and balances prior to prescribing the required medication. It also ensures that medical facilities and providers who do not want to participate in aid in dying medical care, or wish to preclude it at their facilities, may do so without penalty so long as the patient is referred for care to a provider who can assist.

I watched this bill make it through the House of Delegates in 2019, including some passionate discussion during floor debate. In my prior private practice of law, I spent five years of my career representing individuals who suffered from mesothelioma, a terminal cancer caused by asbestos.

During those five years, I watched as each of my clients suffered in the final weeks of their lives and endured repeated trips to the emergency room to have fluid drained off of their lungs. They had no ability to direct when the suffering had been enough and to do so in a dignified fashion. The decision of whether to avail oneself of the proposed provisions of Senate Bill 845 is a personal choice.

Members of this body, family members of individuals who would use the end-of-life option act's provisions, and members of the general public may disagree or not view it as a viable treatment option for themselves. This Act allows individuals to discern the best course of action for themselves based on their own personal preferences, medical diagnosis and prognosis, and allows them the choice of sharing their decision with their family members or refraining from

doing so. Each individual has their own moral and/or religious philosophies that should guide them in making their choices regarding terminal illness. Passing this bill will not interfere with those choices, it simply offers an additional option.

A relative of mine [went through this as she battled terminal cancer](#), but her husband is a vociferous advocate against end-of-life decision making that allows for aid in dying¹. Again, these are individual choices no different than refusing a surgical procedure that may have little success in a terminal illness, like an extrapleural pneumonectomy for a mesothelioma patient, and complement other existing medical care options such as palliative care and hospice.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge passage of Senate Bill 845.

Very truly yours,



Councilmember Dawn Luedtke
District 7

1

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2014/06/23/323330486/how-a-womans-plan-to-kill-herself-helped-her-family-grieve>