

**Statement By Maryland Citizen In Opposition to SB443
("Assisted Suicide" Bill)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 8, 2024 Legislative Hearing**

I write as a Maryland citizen and resident to express my strong opposition to SB443, the assisted suicide legislation currently before the Judicial Proceedings Committee of the Maryland State Senate.

The campaign to force assisted suicide on our beautiful State of Maryland began in 2015. Then Marylanders saw the campaign's opening salvos, part of a nationwide push to overturn laws protecting the sanctity of life and to implement "assisted suicide" schemes. Given the anti-life culture fostered by Maryland's liberal abortion laws and the one-party control of the Maryland General Assembly, proponents saw Maryland as fertile ground for their schemes. Announced opposition by Maryland's then newly elected Governor Larry Hogan caused the effort to stall but did not cause proponents to abandon the campaign. Enactment of assisted suicide became a "cause", almost a religion for them and they continue to press forward.

Initially, the campaign focused on changing the terms of the debate from one about the sanctity of human life to one about "choice" and "compassion". Subtle efforts were made to play upon people's own fear of death and on compassion for a loved one suffering from terminal illness. Efforts were made to shift focus onto suffering individuals – subtly suggesting their lives are essentially meaningless - and onto the movement's "heroes", those seeking to take their own lives or assist others to do so.

Legislatively, the focus became not one of substance but on procedure. Much was made about the supposedly limited circumstances under which assisted suicide would be allowed to take place, the supposed procedural safeguards and the supposed wisdom of other jurisdictions which have enacted similar measures. Of course, once the sanctity of human life is cast aside, these protections can be modified or eliminated and other states' experience is not necessarily relevant or desirable for Marylanders.

Since the campaign began, assisted suicide legislation has been passed in several other states and in Canada. From these has emerged a variety of "horror" stories. Older people were pressured to avoid supposedly "expensive" treatments and, under the legislation, to take their own life. Severely disabled Canadian military veterans were advised to take their own lives rather than continue to press for help with their conditions. The Canadian incidents are particularly heart-wrenching for me as one who has experience in working closely with veterans. Our disabled American veterans deserve a better ending than the dark future of this legislation.

In the end this legislation is nothing more than a means to legitimize the taking of the lives of those who are not wanted. Such is the inevitable result for those societies that, by rejecting the sanctity of life, begin a slide into darkness. Among the most horrific examples of such societies is Adolph Hitler's Nazi regime. Under various Nazi euthanasia schemes began in the 1930's, thousands had their lives deemed to be of no value and were put to death.

In contrast to that dark side, there are numerous heroes on the pro-life side. These are individuals whose choice of life over death in the face of debilitating disease serves as an example for all. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt suffered terribly from a brutally crippling disease during his presidency yet refused to surrender to it, leading the nation through the Depression and to victory in World War Two. Pope John Paul II, in his later years, suffered from a debilitating and ultimately fatal disease yet deliberately put his struggle into public view to inspire others and show the meaning of suffering in human existence. In our own lives, all of us know someone who, despite their struggle with disease or terminal illness, chose life and thereby became an example to us.

Ultimately at issue here is the principle of the sanctity of human life. Assisted suicide is an attack on that principle. It seeks to create exceptions to the principle and carve out categories of people who do not enjoy its full protection. We claim to be a civilized society in which all are valued and protected. If we are to be, we must uphold the sanctity of human life against all such attacks. If we do not, then we will be taking a step on the dark road down to barbarism. "Assisted suicide" must have no place in the State of Maryland.

Reject SB443.

Paul Schilling