

Testimony of Richard Shermanski
In Favor of Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass End of Life
Option Act

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to address you today on a matter of profound importance—the Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass End of Life Option Act (SB0443 and HB0403). I stand before you not only as an advocate for this legislation but also as an Attorney who has faced the challenges of learning disabilities and ADHD. My personal journey has shaped my perspective on the values we hold dear—autonomy, independence, and self-determination. However, my story takes on an even deeper dimension as I now advocate not only as an Attorney with disabilities but also as a father of a son with autism. Additionally, I proudly serve on the Montgomery County Commission for people with disabilities, currently in my second term.

In my capacity on the Commission, I have had the privilege of working directly with individuals who navigate the complexities of disabilities daily. This experience has further deepened my commitment to disability rights advocacy. As we discuss the End of Life Option Act today, it is vital to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the medical aid in dying and disability rights movements, both of which I actively champion.

A recent national poll found that 79% of those with disabilities support medical aid in dying for terminally ill, mentally capable adults. This resounding endorsement reinforces the interconnectedness of our shared values, irrespective of the diverse challenges we may face. It is a call to uphold the dignity and agency of every individual, echoing the principles of autonomy and independence that are at the heart of both movements.

My role on the Montgomery County Commission for people with disabilities has provided me with firsthand insight into the daily challenges faced by individuals in our community. It has been an honor to contribute to the advocacy and policy initiatives that aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for everyone. The End of Life Option Act aligns with the principles I champion within the Commission, emphasizing inclusivity and recognizing the diverse human experiences that shape our society.

The legislation we discuss today is not a mere legal matter; it is a profound reflection on our humanity and the values that define us. It invites us to consider the broader implications of compassion, empathy, and the inherent dignity of every human being, regardless of their abilities or health condition.

As a father and a member of the Montgomery County Commission for people with disabilities, I am acutely aware of the importance of fostering a society that respects the rights and agency of every individual, regardless of their abilities. The End-of-Life Option Act, by acknowledging the agency of terminally ill, mentally capable adults, aligns with this vision of inclusivity and compassion.

Moreover, I want to take a moment to emphasize the significance of the End of Life Option Act in the context of my personal journey. Faced with learning disabilities and ADHD, I navigated a challenging path to becoming an Attorney. The experience of overcoming my own perceived limitations has fueled my commitment to advocate not only for the rights of those facing end of life decisions but also for the broader principles of inclusivity and empowerment.

In discussing the End of Life Option Act, we delve into the very essence of our humanity. This legislation is an opportunity for us to reevaluate our societal values and ensure that our laws reflect a commitment to individual autonomy and dignity. It challenges us to confront preconceived notions, dismantle barriers, and pave the way for a more compassionate and inclusive society.

In conclusion, I urge each one of you to consider the significance of the End of Life Option Act. This legislation is not only a reflection of our commitment to the autonomy and dignity of those facing the end of their lives but also a testament to our dedication to a society that embraces diversity and recognizes the agency of every member. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Richard E. Shermanski, Jr., Esq.