



TESTIMONY TO THE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SB0443: End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda Kohn, President

DATE: February 8, 2024

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. **The League believes that state laws should grant the option for a terminally ill person to request medical assistance from a relevant, licensed physician to end one's life. It also believes that such legislation should include safeguards against abuse for the dying and/or medical personnel.**

The League thus supports **Senate Bill 443: End-of-Life Option (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act).**

Every individual should have the right to choose how much unrelievable suffering they are willing to endure at the end of their life. Electing to end that suffering, to maintain some degree of self-determination and control over one's final days, to preserve one's dignity, should be an option for those Marylanders who choose to exercise it. With numerous important safeguards built in to the process, it would provide an option for a terminally ill, capable, and competent adult with a prognosis of six months or less to live, to request, legally receive from a physician, and voluntarily self-administer a prescription medication to hasten their death in a peaceful manner.

Regarding those who morally object to this option, Elijah Cummings, in a February 12, 2019 letter to Delegate Clippinger, Delegate Pendergrass, and Senator Zirkin in support of the proposed 2019 End of Life Option Act, **wrote:**

...there are those among us whose conscience can never accept that any person should have the right to choose the manner and time of their passing, even when facing death in the very near term....

It seems to me, however, that the critical issue addressed by *The End of Life Option Act* is...**the question of who has the right to choose.**

The Act would recognize that the constitutional right to privacy in Maryland includes the right of a terminally ill human being- legally competent, fully informed, and protected from coercion- to choose the manner and time of their passing. It would recognize and declare that, **at the end of life, an individual's right to self-determination about one of the most personal decisions that anyone could make supersedes the moral sensibility of others.**¹

Ten states and the District of Columbia have already passed legislation legalizing medical aid in dying, and eighteen additional states have introduced legislation for consideration this year. Marylanders support this.² Per the 2023 Gonzales Maryland Poll, **71% of Maryland voters support medical aid in dying.**

Maryland has a long history of considering, but not passing aid in dying legislation. The first attempt was made in 1995, with House Bill 933. After multiple attempts over 29 years, and with broad popular support, **it is time now to pass this important legislation.**

The League of Women Voters Maryland, representing 1,500+ concerned citizens throughout Maryland, strongly urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 443.

¹ https://www.compassionandchoices.org/docs/default-source/maryland/rep.cummings-hb399-sb311-2019.pdf?sfvrsn=354ad242_1

² https://candc.org/docs/default-source/maryland/cc_mdpolling_onesheet_8.5x11_2023_02.pdf?sfvrsn=d6fd24a4_1