

**Testimony in Support of SB 443
End-Of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings
and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)**

TO: Senator Will Smith, Jr, Chair and members of the Judicial Proceedings
Committee
FROM: Elaine Shell, District 23
DATE: February 8, 2023

Death can happen for endless numbers of reasons and at any time in a person's life. It can be a scary thing to think about. It can also be a calming state to think about, depending on an individual's beliefs. I believe that death will be a state of nothing. I'll be gone. That's it. That's what my parents believed also. They lived in a small town on the West side of Michigan. Mom had a photograph of Doctor Kevorkian, who promoted medical aid in dying, on their living room wall and to the side of their bed. It was a clear statement of their desires. Then my Dad had a massive stroke at the age of 66. Back in 1977 there weren't many options for stroke recovery available. He was never again able to walk, get himself out of a chair, talk (except for Yes and No), read, write or clearly see the TV – and he was in pain. My Dad was fully aware of what his life had become. He lived for 12 years(!) in this state. He wanted to be dead every day of those 12 years! He ended up starving himself to death which is not a pleasant way to die. I realize that the legislation under consideration would not have helped my Dad, but **I wanted to share that some living situations are truly awful.**

A nurse once told me that she was against Medical Aid in Dying because she had experienced relatives pressuring the medical staff to end a parent's life to get their inheritance earlier. OK, this is possible, but I offer to you that a more reasonable explanation for the family's request is that the relatives didn't want the suffering and prolonged existence of their family member because the patient was very eager to "have it over with". Being alive, without being functional and probably in pain, may be ok for some people, but if I had told my doctors and family that I truly want help to end my existence, and it didn't happen, it would make my existence even harder on me, and for my family members who had no control to help me.

The Maryland End-of-Life *Advanced Directive* is a good step toward encouraging individuals and their families to think about, and communicate, the level of care that they choose for themselves when a death diagnosis occurs. Personal Choice is a very powerful element of human life. When people 'choose' their life decisions such as careers, life-time partners, places to live, etc., then following through on those choices is typically both satisfying and rewarding. Being told that you must live your end-of-life according to someone else's decisions, creates lingering anxiety, anger and fear.

If I know that the State of Maryland will honor my decision to choose medical aid to end my life, I will have the power to end my life when it makes sense to me (within the context of the law). **What a magnificent Choice you can provide to Marylanders. Please VOTE YES on SB-0443.**

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