

SB 443-END OF LIFE OPTION ACT

TESTIMONY OF KATHERINE ADELAIDE, JD, A RESIDENT OF MARYLAND

February 7, 2024

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on this bill.

I have testified AGAINST these types of bills for many years.

My 95-year-old father passed away naturally at home with his family of Alzheimer's in 2018.

My testimony then, having observed his final days with hospital hospice and then home hospice, was that these types of bills are completely unnecessary as hospice can be used essentially to accomplish the same goals of diminishing pain and shortening lifespan if so desired by the patient. I heard arguments that it was urgent that nobody suffer even for two extra weeks to justify physician assisted suicide. My conclusion then, as it is now, is that you simply cannot legislate enough safeguards to make this process safe or equitable, as I believe it is naturally discriminatory against elderly women of color, the depressed and the disabled. Nobody cheats death and there is never any excuse for any third party to hasten anybody's death.

Self-murder is a life and death decision that must be made entirely by the individual and not facilitated by the government or their agents, including insurance agencies, in any way, much less funded by taxpayers money. We all have "free will," but the role of government is to protect life, not hasten death.

My mother passed on September 7th 2023 at age 91, less than 6 months ago, and her story is a little bit different than my father's.

She had osteoporosis and broke her pelvis in three places last year. I witnessed firsthand quite possibly the most excruciating pain a person can be in and did round the clock care for almost a month. It was the most difficult thing to watch and I felt helpless. Despite my best efforts at comfort care, she begged for assisted suicide from exhaustion, confusion and severe pain, but the nurse thank goodness told her that it was not legal in Virginia and within a few hours she forgot about that idea and focused on getting through each hour and miraculously with lots of support the pelvis fractured finally healed and she went on to have a very good quality of life for eight more months. None of us knows the future and I value every moment of that extra time with her and I know she did also. I'm so grateful that Virginia had not passed assisted suicide where in her pain and desperation she would have made a decision that would have decimated her family relationships forever.

The only real end of life options are love and care, including psychiatric care, service/ emotional support animals, music and a multitude of other support systems for the dying.

There is no dignity in death by self-murder assisted by the government, but there can be models of courage and support as healthy end life options.

We need to celebrate the process of end of life because even painful memories can be transformative for patients and future generations.

I had an elderly friend with a terminal brain tumor who could no longer speak. I asked his family if it was okay if I asked him to hang on from Thanksgiving until after my birthday on January 3rd because I couldn't bear to lose him during the holidays.

I told the family I would abide by their decision, but I encouraged them to find the good in each remaining moment of his life because it would come to an end and that was all the memories, good and bad, they were going to have and they agreed that most likely years down the road they would remember small, special moments in those extra days, not the suffering, his or theirs.

I received a phone message on January 4th from his family that my good friend Herb had passed peacefully in the wee hours.

What a testament to the power of love as an End of Life option, my heartfelt honesty of not wanting to lose him during the holidays and his miraculous response to hang on.

I am so grateful that my mother did not exercise her free will to commit suicide and not experience all the good memories of those final eight months. I am equally grateful that the government of Virginia did not interfere with her final days, but continued to provide positive support via assisted living services.

I urge you to do the same and give this bill an unfavorable report.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Katherine Adelaide. JD

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