

February 8 2024

Testimony of Gary C. Norman, Esq. L.L.M.

Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, Maryland

Submitted electronically

Regarding: The End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act), S. 0443 & H. 0403, Reg. Sess. (2024)

Dear Chairs and Committee Members:

I provide these following remarks as a lawyer and as a person with a disability, who also serves as policy counsel at US for Autonomy. My public policy work has been infused with the “lived experience” of the benefits and the challenges of having a disability. I urge a favorable report.

I urge that choices exist throughout the life spans of all people, including, as to end-of-life care options. I have witnessed loved ones, including two guide dog partners, transition to that place from which no traveler returns. Those dying processes and transitions have typically not been dainty and pain free experiences for all involved. To refer to *A Christmas Carol*, I am a member of humanity. The dying process to be experienced by all beings must be de-medicalized and empowered with improvements in choice. If you pass these bills, this will enable an option that I may or may not pursue in the future. However, another person may select this option in consultation with their families, with professionals required in the bills, and indeed with their understanding of deity.

Arguably, these bills provide a set of notable processes and protections opponents want to ignore. Many witnesses have described these protections in detail. No grand scheme exists to abuse people with disabilities, as the thoughtful processes and protections in these bills show as a normative policy goal. I would, as a moderate and policy counsel, not support these bills, if I had concerns and also knew of long-term documented data reflecting negative outcomes to this policy decision.

In conclusion, the law must empower citizens to render their own medical and other intimate decisions. Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts on this important public policy question.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary C. Norman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Gary C. Norman, Esq. L.L.M.