



Hospice & Palliative Care Network
OF MARYLAND

Letter of Information

SB443: End-of-Life Option Act - The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act

Contact: Peggy Funk, Executive Director 410.891.5741

SB443, the End-of-Life Option Act, named after The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, has been recently introduced to the Maryland legislature. Following thorough discussion, the HPCNM Board of Directors has reached a consensus to adopt a neutral stance on this bill. Nevertheless, HPCNM aims to provide valuable information related to this proposed legislation:

- ***Patients facing life-limiting illness and their families need honest information about prognosis early and frequently after their diagnosis.*** Armed with adequate information, patients have more access and choices for better pain management, palliative care, and enrollment in hospice. Encouraging patients to document their preferences ensures that their end-of-life decisions are well-documented.
- ***Hospice and palliative care professionals believe in respect for patient decisions.*** Hospice and palliative care professionals advocate for respect for patient decisions. Their role is not to pass judgment on the legal decisions patients make regarding the end of their lives. Instead, they focus on providing expert physical, emotional, and spiritual symptom management, and relief through all available means, **without intentionally hastening or causing death.**
- ***Hospice care provides terminally ill patients and their families with compassion, comfort, and security, replacing suffering, desperation, and loneliness.*** Timely referrals to hospice can provide patients and their families with opportunities to reduce physical and emotional pain, fostering the creation of meaningful memories. The last months of life, when symptoms are controlled and support is present, can facilitate individual growth and love, providing patients death with dignity and families with closure. Unfortunately, fewer than half of eligible patients receive hospice care, and a significant portion of those referred to do so in their final days, miss out on many benefits such as comfort, emotional counseling, volunteer companionship, and spiritual care.
- ***A cultural shift needs to happen that emphasizes hospice care as "Affirming Life."*** Hospice should not be perceived as care for the brink of death or when there is no hope. Patients redefine hope for themselves when equipped with honest information, realistic expectations, and compassionate support from a team of professionals skilled in relieving distress.

About Hospice & Palliative Care Network of Maryland (HPCNM)

HPCNM represents hospice and palliative care across the State. Our mission is to lead and advance quality hospice and palliative care by serving as an advocate and resource for all Marylanders. Empowering palliative care and hospice services, together we deliver comfort, resources, and dignity to families during a poignant time – at the end of life. In 2022, Hospice providers served over 25,000 patients.
