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TESTIMONY ON HB#/1328 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#/1328, End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)

The primary challenge with this bill is that multiple religions, depending on the specific denomination within that faith tradition, do not agree with it and want to actively oppose it **regardless of the faith, or lack of, by the affected person who wants this for themselves.**

Within my own Jewish faith, the more conservative the denomination the more likely the opposition to this bill.

My Jewish Learning has studied *Euthanasia: A Jewish View*.¹ Some Christians base their opposition on the redemptive character of suffering. Euthanasia is unwarranted, the argument goes, because pain is itself salvational, symbolized most graphically by the crucifixion of Jesus. Other Christian voices oppose any medical intervention, including those intended to reduce pain, as an improper human intrusion onto God's prerogatives of deciding when to inflict illness and when to bring healing.²

But should the state or a religious body or figure have control of an individual's decisions when facing death under conditions in which that death can relieve suffering and pain and hasten the return of that soul, so guarded by that faith, to the source they believe bestowed it on the individual?

This bill promotes the right of individuals to make that determination on end of life to themselves in consultation with appropriate individuals to ensure it is a reasonable and fully informed decision. This bill will authorize an individual to request aid in dying by making certain requests.

¹ <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/euthanasia-a-jewish-view/>

² For a sampling of varying religions approaches to assisted death, including Rabbi Elliott N. Dorff's more extensive treatment of Jewish perspectives on this issue, see *Must We Suffer Our Way to Death? Cultural and Theological Perspectives on Death by Choice*, eds. Ronald P. Hamel and Edwin R. Dubose (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1996).

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The bill establishes requirements and prohibitions governing aid in dying, including requirements related to requests for aid in dying, consulting physicians, mental health assessments, the disposal of drugs prescribed for aid in dying, health care facility policies, and the effect of aid in dying on insurance policies. It then makes it possible, without sanction, for a pharmacist to dispense medication for aid in dying only to certain individuals under certain circumstances. That pharmacist is shielded from prosecution if all the steps authorizing that dispensing have occurred.

What gives any religious faith or person or the government the right to make this decision for those who do not adhere to their view on this very personal issue? Why must that predominate over the wishes of the person seeking their own death with dignity?

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/1328