

Hello Everyone

My name is Nicole LeBlanc from Silver Spring MD. I'm on the Autism Spectrum. I am here to ask that you strongly oppose the Doctor Assisted Suicide bill otherwise known as "Death with Dignity". This piece of legislation concerns and affects me greatly because of the message that it is sending to people with disabilities, the elderly and our young people. On a personal level in 2008 I had a cousin who was a cancer survivor who committed suicide out of the middle of nowhere.

By legalizing PAS we are creating a double standard where some folks get suicide prevention and others get physician assisted suicide which is in clear violation of the ADA. PAS is often not freely chosen because people with disabilities don't want to be seen as a burden on their families, which leads it to being the only option.

With so many inequities in our healthcare and long term care system it is not possible for our vulnerable citizens to be given real choices at the end of life. Studies have shown that medical professionals tend to misjudge our quality of life based on the fact that we are dependent on others for support in our everyday lives. As we have seen during the COVID19 pandemic, our society and healthcare system is very ableist towards people with disability and chronic conditions. For instance many COVID long haulers have dealt with ableism in our healthcare system.

Our society should be focused on investing in robust end of life care and suicide prevention. For instance the Autism Community has a higher rate of suicide than the general population. Studies have shown that up to 66% of autistic adults have thought about taking their own life, and an

alarming **35% have attempted suicide.** A high number of them are undiagnosed or late diagnosed and have high IQ's and higher rates of trauma, anxiety and mental health challenges. Now more than ever we must invest in suicide prevention and robust end of life palliative care for those who need it.

If MD were to adopt a law similar to the Oregon style law it would conflict with our Adult Protective Services statutes because it devalues people with disabilities and would work against the intent of the APS statute which is to protect vulnerable folks from abuse.

People with Disabilities want and need a robust Home-Community Based Services System, mental health and quality health care Not Physician Assisted Suicide! Please VOTE NO on this Bill.

Thank You for listening to my testimony.