

Honorable members of the committee,

The Patients Rights Action Fund is a leading national, non-partisan single-issue organization that protects the rights of patients, people with disabilities, older adults, and other historically underrepresented groups from deadly harm and discrimination inherent in assisted suicide laws. We submit this testimony urging you to vote no on HB 1328.

To see why this is dangerous policy for Maryland, we can look to Oregon where this has been legal for nearly 30 years. The data tells us plainly that 71% of requesting patients do not report pain, or even fear of future pain as a motivating factor. In fact, pain has never been among the top five reasons that patients request lethal drugs on which to overdose. Instead, patients do not want to be a burden on their family and caregivers, and cite other reasons of disability.

For patients experiencing the natural human feelings of being a burden, they need support and help. Instead, their physician gives them experimental drugs so they can go home and die alone.

Despite these feelings of sadness, patients are referred for mental health evaluations less than 3% of the time. Patients will doctor shop until they find a prescriber willing to participate in their suicide. In fact, the median length of time of the prescriber-patient relationship is only six weeks.

Patients have been approved for conditions such as diabetes and anorexia. There is no requirement in the law that patients try treatment or maintain treatment. The practical application of the wording is that anyone who would die within six months with OR without treatment, qualifies. In 2023, a suicidal patient chose to stop eating and drinking. They did not have a qualifying condition, but the prescriber deemed them to be terminal due to their voluntary and reversible action. They waived the waiting period and the patient died a few days later. The language of the Maryland law permits similar abuse.

Patients in Oregon also cite financial implications of treatment as a reason for requesting lethal drugs. Staring down an uncertain future and feeling like a burden who is only leaving medical bills to their loved ones can drive people to end their life. Marylanders deserve better. Please vote no on HB 1328.

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