

## **Testimony by Mary Blanken in Support of Maryland End-of-Life Option Act HB1328**

My name is Mary Blanken. I am a retired Nurse Practitioner living in Frederick Maryland. I spent 25 years as a NP working in geriatrics and end-of-life care was my specialty.

I want to thank Delegate Josephine Pena-Melnyk and committee members for considering my testimony.

I fully support the proposed legislation that allows mentally capable, terminally ill adults the option to obtain prescription medication they can take to peacefully end their suffering if it becomes unbearable. Here is one reason why.

My friend of 45 years, my maid of honor when I got married, was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer in January 2022. I went with her to Hopkins and met with a pancreatic cancer specialist and a surgeon. They recommended chemo and if it went well, potential surgery down the road. She was an extremely successful business woman, and like in her business, she was going to produce the intended result-staying alive. Professionally, I knew what her battle would likely look like. If this legislation had been passed, my conversations with her would have been very different. She would have had control if her suffering became unbearable. Instead, in an act of desperation, she went out of the country for surgery and died a week later, alone.

There are 10 states and WDC that allow medical aid in dying. It is long overdue for the residents of Maryland where 71% of people support it.

I have witnessed quite a bit of suffering during my career. Hospice and palliative care programs do an excellent job in mitigating it. And yet, what it comes down to is the individual's ability to have some sense of control when their body is being ravaged.

Passing this legislation is an act of compassion for the fragility of human life. None of us know what our journeys will look like. Suffering is personal. One thing I know is that the inner peace that comes when a human being has at least some control amidst an existential lack of control, is invaluable. It is up to the individual to make this choice.

Please pass this legislation. You and I, or our loved ones, may need it. Thank you.

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