

March 3, 2025
Jo Shifrin
Bethesda, MD 20817

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 and

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Jo Shifrin

OPENING: My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 1328 End of Life Option Act: (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act).

Jewish tradition teaches us that the Divine encompasses both *Tzedek V'Rachamim*, justice and mercy. We also believe in *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world so that it is a better place.

When I was a young girl, my grandfather was gravely ill with cancer. At the time, there was little that medicine could provide him. One day his heart stopped and the doctors performed CPR to try to resuscitate him. My grandmother begged the doctors to let him die. She had seen him in unending pain for months; bringing him back to suffer some more didn't make sense. It was only when I was older that I realized that what she did was an act of loving kindness.

Many Marylanders have had to witness the death of someone they loved from a horrible, terminal disease. The suffering they witness is often the memory that hurts them the most. Doctors take a vow to preserve life, but what is the point of prolonging a person's life past the point where all they experience is pain? What is the point of keeping them alive and with minimal pain if all they experience is a fog or unconsciousness from the drugs? Aren't the dying entitled to their own agency? Don't they deserve to have choices in the last stage of their lives?

Currently, if you live in Maryland, our laws prevent the terminally ill from making the choice to end their life. I believe that an individual should have the right, the agency to make the choice to end their life when there is no hope of recovery and the pain they are experiencing destroys their sense of living a meaningful life. The dying –and not the state of Maryland– should be able to say how and when they say goodbye to their loved ones.

I respectfully urge these committees to return a favorable report on HB 1328.