

Testimony by Ella-Mae Shupe in Support of Maryland End-of-Life Option Act ([HB1328/SB926](#))

By way of introduction, I'm Ella-Mae, a Nursing Practice & Professional Development Specialist for radiation oncology at a large hospital in Baltimore. For 11 years, I treated pancreatic cancer patients with chemotherapy prior to this role in radiation oncology.

I'd like to take a moment to thank Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Chair, Senator William C. Smith, Jr., or House Health & Government Operations Committee Chair, Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnik, and committee members for considering your written testimony.

I support the proposed legislation to allow mentally capable, terminally ill adults the end-of-life care option to obtain prescription medication so that they can decide to take this medication to peacefully end their suffering if it become unbearable.

As you know, Washington, D.C. and 10 other states allow medical aid in dying which began with Oregon in 1997. It is long overdue that Maryland residents are offered the same gentle dying option.

As an oncology nurse for 23 years, I have seen the unnecessary suffering of people who were dying of a terminal illness, knowing there was no hope for improvement or cure. Hospice eases family burdens and offers support to caregivers, but for the patient, they must continue to decline, suffer, and slowly die while family watch and hope for a quick death. The memory that is left with family is the suffering not the beauty of their life. Some deaths are painful despite the pain medications available and others refuse to eat and drink to end their life, which is a miserable, slow death as organs begin to fail. In short, options available now, are cruel and offer little dignity for the patient dying.

My mother had dementia and knew she was progressing rapidly and this strong woman became a weak, frail, human. Every day she would say, "Mae, please kill me". I would have to tell her that I couldn't do that and she would smile and say "I know". Imagine listening to your parent beg for death and as a caregiver, and daughter, unable to do anything but watch her slip away in a long, painful, slow death. She would have loved the option to have her family hold her, talk to her, kiss her, as she slowly took her last breath with the option of taking medication and control her demise.

Please consider and pass medical aid-in-dying legislation this session. There are so many people that would benefit and allow dignity, peace, and love in death. Isn't that how you would like to end your life? Or see your loved one have this peace?

Thank you for your attention to this issue!

If you would like to discuss further or have any questions, my contact information is below:

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Sincerely with hope and passion for this change

Ella-Mae Shupe