



Hospice & Palliative Care Network
OF MARYLAND

Letter of Information
SB926/HB1328 End-of-Life Option Act
(The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)
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After careful deliberation, the Hospice & Palliative Care Network of Maryland (HPCNM) has decided to take a neutral position on SB926/HB1328, the End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act). As an organization dedicated to advancing access to quality hospice and palliative care, supporting healthcare professionals, and advocating for patients and families, HPCNM remains committed to providing relevant information to support your understanding of this proposed legislation.

Key Considerations:

- **Early and Transparent Communication Matters**
Patients facing life-limiting illnesses—and their families—deserve clear, honest, and frequent discussions about their prognosis. With this information, they can explore all available care options, including better pain management, palliative care, and timely hospice enrollment. Encouraging patients to document their preferences ensures their end-of-life choices are honored.
- **Expert Pain and Symptom Control**
Patients with serious illness deserve expert pain and symptom control – whether they struggle with cancer, heart disease, neurologic illness or any other ailment. Their families require support and guidance as care partners with their own stressors. Access to, and education about non-hospice pain and palliative care services and social support is essential to facilitate treatments, which may be challenging as illnesses progress.
- **Respect for Patient Decisions**
Hospice and palliative care professionals do not judge the legal choices patients make about the end of their lives. Their focus remains on expert symptom management—physical, emotional, and spiritual—offering comfort and relief through all available means, without intentionally hastening or causing death.
- **Hospice Provides Compassionate, Comprehensive Support**
Hospice care offers terminally ill patients and their loved ones comfort, dignity, and security, replacing suffering and isolation with meaningful support. Early hospice referrals allow patients and families to benefit from reduced pain, emotional counseling, volunteer companionship, and spiritual care. However, fewer than half of eligible patients receive hospice care, and many who do are referred in their final days—missing out on the full range of support hospice provides.
- **Shifting the Perception of Hospice as "Affirming Life"**
Hospice care empowers patients to redefine hope, find comfort, and make the most of their remaining time with the support of a skilled, compassionate care team. When distress is effectively managed, the final months of life can be filled with personal growth, meaningful moments, and love.
- **The Need for Hospice and Palliative Care Education**
Many people are unaware of the full scope of hospice and palliative care services and the choices available to them. Public education is essential to ensure individuals understand they have a clear choice when facing a



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serious illness. Expanding awareness about the benefits of early hospice enrollment and palliative care options can help more people access the support they need for a comfortable and dignified end-of-life experience.

About Hospice & Palliative Care Network of Maryland (HPCNM)

The Hospice & Palliative Care Network of Maryland (HPCNM) is the leading voice for hospice and palliative care organizations across the state. Our mission is to advance and advocate for access to high-quality, compassionate care for individuals with serious and terminal illnesses and their loved ones. In 2023, Maryland's hospice providers collectively cared for 26,455 patients, delivering 1,439,687 Medicare-covered days of care. To learn more, visit www.hnmd.org, email Peggy Funk at peggy.funk@hnmd.org, or call 410-403-8063.