

Oppose SB0926/HB1328 End-of-Life Option Act
Laura Jones — Co-founder of The Dignity Mandate
Annapolis, MD
410-246-5561

Every year I explain how this law would threaten my family. In 2016, our teenage daughter was suicidal with a plan to overdose on drugs. At that same time, my mother-in-law was facing a terminal illness with a 6-month diagnosis. If it was legal, she could request the deadly drugs to have on hand to overdose at a time of her choosing. This is so dangerous!

How many households have a teenager with mental health issues and another family member with a terminal illness? My mother-in-law passed away in 2023, 8 years after her 6-month prognosis. Now my daughter is facing some unknown health issues. Given her past inclinations to suicide, I find it appalling the bill now offers no assurance that she will get the help she needs if she has a terminal illness and wants to die.

In states where this practice is legal, suicide rates increased 6.3%. This is the most conservative number you will find in studies, because the study was set up to determine if suicide rates go down as proponents often say will happen if assisted suicide is legalized.

We are not talking about the terminally ill people this law will put in danger because the mental health assessment was removed from the bill this year. These are the people who will decide to commit suicide because someone in their circle of influence died using the end-of-life option to overdose on drugs.

Johns Hopkins did a study that shows children under the age of 18 with a parent who commits suicide are 3 times more likely to commit suicide than children of living parents. Imagine all the sick and elderly people who decide to die early so their grandchildren can have the money to go to college, and instead their grandchildren decide to kill themselves too.

In MD -608 people died from suicide in 2022. (see submitted data)

A 6.3% increase will mean an additional 38 people will commit suicide if you pass this law.

If you do not care about my family, then think about who in your family might fall victim. (If you only care about the money saved by people dying early than consider this- The average cost due to lost work because of one suicide is \$1,168,110. Losing an additional 38 people will result in \$44, 388,180 lost income per year in Maryland.)

What you must understand is suicide is contagious. It spreads like an infection in the mind. A compulsive thought that will not go away. There are 100's of reports on suicide contagion. Additional people will decide to take their own life because they heard of someone who died by drug overdose using the End-of-Life option. Making this a "Good Option" for some is dangerous.

According to the CDC, there is a continual rise of suicides in people over 55. Proof once again that it is very easy to end your life. The hard part is facing down death and staying alive. We need help to fully live out our days, not assistance in getting drugs to overdose and die early.

Proponents skillfully convinced the American Association of Suicidology to print a paper stating some ways PAS is not the same as suicide, but that paper was retired in 2023 and the Association of Suicidology is taking another look at this connection. (see submitted press release)

The Alzheimer Association hoped Compassion and Choices would help their patients, but broke ties with them because "Their values are inconsistent with those of the Association." (see submitted statement)

If you once thought this was a good idea, it is time to reevaluate your position. Stop looking at this option as good for someone you know who had a difficult death. That is the most hypothetical statement out there. Even if they said they wanted to die and did not want to go on, that is not proof they wanted to drink a poisonous drink and kill themselves.

My mother-in-law often said things like this. We only mentioned this bill to her one time and her eyes filled with terror as she pleaded with us to do whatever it takes to stop it from passing. She saw it as a threat because it would encourage her to do something she would never want to do.

When we become old and sick, we will all become somewhat of a burden on others. This law will make us seriously consider if we have a right to be alive when we need so much help. It will especially be hard to hear our loved ones say, "You do not need to go on like this. I hate to see you suffer."

The same organizations who are pressuring you to pass this law, have similar tactics they plan to use on us all when we become sick.

Oppose HB 1328 and protect everyone from the contagious nature of suicide.