



TESTIMONY TO THE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SB 926: End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E Pendergrass Act)

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda Kohn, President

DATE: March 5, 2025

In 2018 the League of Women Voters of Maryland ran a multi-membered study group that reviewed relevant data regarding Death with Dignity. Upon completion, the League released the following position:

- a) The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes that state laws should grant the option for a terminally ill person to request medical assistance from a relevant, licensed physician to end one's life**
- b) The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes that such legislation should include safeguards against abuse for the dying and/or medical personnel.**

The League of Women Voters believes in an individual's right to a health care system that provides for basic care throughout their lifetime. The League also supports the individual's right to privacy. This privacy also extends throughout their lifetime.

An individual's concept of End-of-Life is going to be colored by multiple factors, including age, religion, ethnicity, previous and current experiences with their healthcare providers, and their current and future state of health. These factors are unique to each individual and play a part in their decision making regarding health care options at the end of their lives.

Senate Bill 926 is closely modeled after the Oregon Death with Dignity Act, which was first enacted in 1994. Like Oregon's act, there are multiple steps the individual and physician must follow to ensure: informed consent, lack of coercion, the individual's ability to make a medical decision, and safety for the individual and the physician. Documentation standards related to interactions between the individual and physician are established. Protection for the individual's insurance and financial arrangements are also addressed. This bill seeks to serve Marylanders by providing a safe and well regulated process for those who seek medically assisted dying.

Regarding those who morally object to this option, Elijah Cummings, in a February 12, 2019 letter to Delegate Clippinger, Delegate Pendergrass, and Senator Zirkin in support of the 2019 End-of-Life Option Act, **wrote**¹:

...there are those among us whose conscience can never accept that any person should have the right to choose the manner and time of their passing, even when facing death in the very near term...

It seems to me, however, that the critical issue addressed by the End of Life Option Act is...**the question of who has the right to choose.**

The Act would recognize that the constitutional right to privacy in Maryland includes the right of a terminally ill human being- legally competent, fully informed, and protected from coercion- to choose the manner and time of their passing. It would recognize and declare that **at the end of life, an individual's right to self-determination about one of the most personal decisions that anyone could make supersedes the moral sensibility of others.**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 926.

¹ https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2023/jpr/1vTpj-d7Dtr2Ytd1mx5NdtD04Cu_KJBZH.pdf