



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 5, 2025

Senate Bill 926

**End-of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable
Shane E. Pendergrass Act)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 926 would authorize an individual to request aid in dying by making certain requests; establishing requirements and prohibitions governing aid in dying, including requirements related to requests for aid in dying, consulting physicians, mental health assessments, the disposal of drugs prescribed for aid in dying, health care facility policies, and the effect of aid in dying on insurance policies; authorizing a pharmacist to dispense medication for aid in dying only to certain individuals under certain circumstances.

At the heart of the Catholic Church's ministry to the sick, disabled, elderly, and underserved is Christ's call to embrace and care for those most in need of love and compassion. The Church upholds the belief that every life has inherent dignity and value, regardless of age, ability, or health condition. While some see assisted suicide legislation as a compassionate response to fears of pain and loss of dignity in terminal illness, we firmly believe that true compassion lies in providing quality medical care, including effective pain management and exceptional palliative and hospice care.

Data from Oregon raises significant concerns about the practice of assisted suicide. Between 2001 and 2023, 103 patients (7%) took more than six hours to die after ingesting lethal medication. The longest recorded time to death was 137 hours (5.7 days), and nine patients regained consciousness after taking the prescribed drugs.¹ Such unpredictability underscores the risks and potential suffering associated with assisted suicide. Patients facing terminal illness deserve compassion, support, and care—not the means to end their lives.

¹ <https://www.spiked-online.com/2024/11/15/oregon-is-no-model-for-assisted-dying/>

The Catholic Church shares these concerns alongside numerous organizations, including physicians, mental health providers, hospice nurses, pharmacists, disability rights advocates, and senior citizen groups. Laws permitting assisted suicide send a harmful message to those who may already feel like a burden to their families or society, further diminishing their sense of worth and dignity. Additionally, such laws can erode societal support for groups already at higher risk of suicide, including young adults, adolescents, and military personnel. Troubling trends in other countries illustrate these dangers. In Canada, for example, veterans seeking assistance from caseworkers have been inappropriately offered assisted suicide as a "solution" to their struggles.² Furthermore, this proposed legislation lacks a residency requirement, making Maryland a potential destination for assisted suicide.

Now more than ever, providing compassionate end-of-life care is essential, especially as modern society increasingly distances itself from the realities of death and dying. The elderly and vulnerable are often devalued or even exploited for economic gain. However, many families show that the final stages of life can be approached with love, care, and dignity, allowing individuals to participate meaningfully in the Lord's paschal mystery. Through its institutions, the Church remains committed to caring for the elderly and infirm, fostering a peaceful, family-like environment that meets both their material and spiritual needs. Assisted suicide, legalized in many countries, pose serious risks to vulnerable populations and the fabric of family life. While the Church firmly opposes these practices, it remains steadfast in its mission to support families in caring for their loved ones, affirming the sacredness and dignity of every human life.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for an unfavorable report on **SB 926**.

Thank you for your consideration.

² <https://nationalpost.com/news/canadian-veterans-assisted-suicide>