



UNFAVORABLE HB377/SB326
Physician Assistants – Parity With
Other Healthcare Practitioners
Laura Bogley, Executive Director
Maryland Right to Life

We Oppose HB377/SB326

On behalf of our 200,000 followers across the state, we respectfully object to HB377 and SB326. Maryland Right to Life appreciates the contributions physician assistants make for quality healthcare delivery. However, medical scarcity is not justification for reducing the standard of medical care for patients.

We are opposed to all forms of euthanasia, in which intentionally killing patients, either by act or omission, becomes an acceptable part of the scope of medical practice. **This bill would undermine the intent of the Maryland General Assembly to protect patients, by enabling physician assistants to replace the medical expertise and opinion of 2 physicians in withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining care for patients on the unreliable basis of terminality of condition.** Therefore, we strongly urge your unfavorable report.

PA's Do Not Possess the Medical Expertise to Determine Terminality

As written, this bill diminishes professional standards of patient care, expanding the scope of practice of physician assistants including certifying “that a patient is in a terminal condition or has an end-stage condition”.

Determining that a patient will die within six months is fraught with error.

- A major study compared the ability of five professional groups to estimate the survival of patients admitted to a specialist palliative care unit. “No group accurately predicted the length of patient survival more than 50% of the time. When in error, senior clinical staff tended to under-estimate survival” (1).
- From 12-15% of patients outlive hospice which is based on a six-month prognosis (2).
- JJ Hanson was told by three different doctors he had less than six months to live when he was diagnosed with an aggressive terminal brain cancer. Hanson survived for three and a half years and fathered a child (3).
- Jeannette Hall is an Oregon resident diagnosed with cancer in 2000 who was told she had six months to live. She asked her doctor for assisted suicide medication, but he convinced her to fight her disease. Eleven years later, she wrote, “I am so happy to be alive! If my doctor had believed in assisted suicide, I’d be dead.” Jeannette Hall is still alive today! (4)
- Treatable conditions like diabetes or anorexia can become terminal conditions if a patient is
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either denied insurance coverage for medical treatment or fails to treat due to other mental health disorders. Recently diabetes patients in the U.S. experienced a medical scarcity and could not obtain their life-sustaining medication Oxempic, after the drug's efficacy was shown in weight loss, inflating the demand for the drug and overwhelming manufacturers. In Colorado, a young woman received a prescription for Assisted Suicide due to anorexia. Her father intervened to demand her treatment for her underlying medical condition to save his daughter from being euthanized.

Put patients before profits.

Medical Scarcity is a valid concern. However the solution to medical scarcity or the unaffordability of healthcare is not to allow providers to intentionally kill their patients. Reducing the scope of medical practice by licensing physicians assistants to make life and death decisions in withdrawing life support, will undoubtedly result in a greater number of deaths...and at what cost? By enacting this bill into law, the Assembly would be undermining the integrity of the medical profession and patient trust in healthcare. The bill would have a disparate impact on those who are poor or underinsured. The bill puts all of our lives at greater risk of medical misdiagnosis, medical rationing and involuntary euthanasia.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your unfavorable report. Thank you.

END NOTES

1. [National Library of Medicine: Prediction of patient survival by healthcare professionals in a specialist palliative care inpatient unit: a prospective study](#)
2. [J Palliat Med.](#) 2014 Aug 1; 17(8): 894–898. doi: 10.1089/jpm.2013.0631 18.
3. [Man of Steel](#)
4. [She pushed for legal right to die, and - thankfully - was rebuffed](#)