

## **Testimony in Support of the Edna G. Neal Palliative Care Act**

Good afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee.

My name is Venus Jones, and I am here today on behalf of EDNA'S Love, Inc., in strong support of the Edna G. Neal Palliative Care Act.

This bill exists because too many Maryland families face serious illness without comfort, clarity, or choice.

Edna G. Neal passed away in 2020 after a vigilant fight with leukemia. She lived in St. Mary's County, where palliative care was not an option. As her condition worsened, hospice decisions were made that unintentionally robbed her family and friends of final moments — one last hug, words of wisdom, and the opportunity to say goodbye.

Palliative care would not have taken away Edna's hope or treatment. It would have given her comfort, support, and the dignity to transition on her own terms — surrounded by the people she loved.

That is the difference this bill makes.

Palliative care is not hospice. It is not end-of-life care only. It is specialized medical care that works alongside treatment to manage pain, symptoms, and stress — at any stage of serious illness. Yet access to this care in Maryland depends largely on where someone lives or what insurance they carry.

The Edna G. Neal Palliative Care Act ensures that palliative care is offered statewide and covered by all insurers. It improves quality of life, supports families, reduces unnecessary hospitalizations, and saves healthcare dollars — while preserving patient choice.

This is a compassionate, evidence-based policy. It is fiscally responsible. And most importantly, it is humane.

By passing this bill, Maryland has the opportunity to honor Edna's legacy — and protect countless families from unnecessary suffering.

I humbly request your support for this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted in service and love,

Venus J Jones

Founder & President

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