

To: MN House Health Finance and Policy Committee
C/o Josh Sande, Committee Administrator
21 January 2024

Testimony in support of the End-of-Life Options Act

I am a retired Lutheran Pastor. In my 32 years of serving congregations (all in Minnesota), I accompanied perhaps 200 persons and their families on their journeys of dying. In exactly two cases, the person died surrounded by all the family members who wished to be there. These were profoundly sacred times.

I would estimate that half of those dying persons, and perhaps a higher percentage of the families, would wish to have the death occur surrounded by the loved ones who would like to be there. The End-of-Life Options Act would make such a holy time an option for more families. No one would be required to choose that option, but those who did could plan for a ceremony of dying, and invite family and friends, as they would to other holy moments, like a wedding or a baptism.

The Act is written with care to avoid potential abuses. I believe I understand some of the concerns of those who may fear possible misuse of this Act. But I would contend that by NOT allowing some form of Medical Assistance in dying—which would make such sacred ceremonies available when appropriate—our culture is denying individuals and families a very important spiritual experience which could bring into the process of dying the warmth and love of one's closest community.

I thank you for your serious consideration of this legislation.

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