Hello, my name is Mindy Smith and I am here today in support of The Minnesota End-of-Life Options Act. (HF1930). I fully support the law’s intention to provide choices for those that have a terminal diagnosis. I was actively involved in my father’s care as he struggled with ALS and was unable to make the choices that he wanted based on current state and federal laws. My father Bill, who was an active, avid outdoorsman of 62 years young, full of life and hope was given the blow of a devastating diagnosis full of dread and death in his near future. As I am sure everyone here is aware, ALS is a terminal diagnosis and one that is certainly horrific to hear for a 6’6”, former college athlete, who enjoyed life outdoors in the beauty of northern Minnesota…. With his wife, children, and grandchildren. His care was managed by a compassionate group of providers who could offer only physical and emotional “support” …no treatment, no medication, no care that could manage or eliminate the pain, suffering and emotional trauma this diagnosis brought to my father, our family, and friends. He wanted choices so he researched how to end his life without resorting to suicide, which he knew would harm our family. He investigated moving to another state that had passed a right to die law, but realized time would likely run out. He could not understand how individuals with a terminal diagnosis were not allowed to choose how and when to end their life. And then quickly he was unable to move and eventually speak…the heart wrenching statement he made to me and my sister was “I waited too long to end this” … And then for months begged us to take his life for him. At first with words, then spelling on his eye chart board and finally with groans of “roll me over” pleading with us to help him smother. My father’s death on Christmas morning a year later was a gift for him and for us, his suffering was over… however, he died alone, in the middle of the night in a nursing home.

His dream (and mine for him and others) was lovely… He wanted to gather those that loved him, celebrate his life and when the time was right for him, administer a medication to help him leave this earth on his terms, wrapped in loved one’s arms. The Minnesota End-of-Life Options Act would provide that choice of love and compassion for someone like my father.

Thank you.