

Dear Minnesota Legislators,

I am writing in support of HF 1930, the End-of-Life Options Act. My wife and I had planned to attend the hearing on Thursday in person, but I recently contracted COVID and am no longer able to attend. I hope this letter will be included as written testimony.

This issue is quite personal to me. My father wasted away of terminal lung cancer after my mother, who cared for him around the clock, and all those who loved him, watched him suffer in agony for months. My wife, Shelley, was diagnosed at age 59 with stage 3 ovarian cancer in April 2020. She recently completed a third round of chemotherapy.

At this point in the course of the disease, her treatment is focused on reducing the size of her tumors and slowing the further spread of the cancer while maintaining an acceptable quality of life for as long as possible. However, her condition is terminal. She will not have a miraculous recovery or go into spontaneous remission. Shelley and I have talked at length about her end-of-life wishes, and while she is not afraid of dying, she is very fearful of a prolonged and painful death.

Most people who choose medical aid in dying are enrolled in hospice and suffering from end-stage cancer, ALS, or lung disease, conditions where the prognosis is predictable. This bill offers patients with terminal disease the opportunity to die with dignity and without enduring unnecessary pain, at a time and place of their choosing, surrounded by family and friends.

This legislation includes many safeguards. Medical aid in dying is intended only for terminally ill adults with a 6-month or less prognosis who can make their own health care decisions. No guardian, power of attorney, or health care agent can request medical aid in dying for someone else. Two physicians must confirm the patient has less than 6 months to live, and the patient must request medical aid in dying multiple times and must be able to ingest the drug on their own. Physicians and other healthcare providers who do not want to participate in medical aid in dying can opt out of doing so—no one can force them to participate. More than 50 years of experience from authorizing states in the U.S. (OR, WA, MT, VT, CA, CO, DC, HI, NJ, and ME) demonstrates that such laws work as intended with no reports of abuse or the “slippery slope” that so many opponents cite.

I have heard some opponents of this legislation say that it takes courage to fight a painful terminal disease until the agonizing end. There is no courage in forcing someone to needlessly endure pain. That's called cruelty. Courage is supporting someone who is terminally ill and whom you love, but who wishes for medical assistance to end their unnecessary suffering.

Terminally ill adults deserve the freedom to know they are in control at the end of life and that they have the option of a peaceful death. No one should be forced to suffer. Please support the Minnesota End-of-Life Options Act.

Sincerely,
Michael Greco
Lakeville, MN