

Anne Grant

For hearing on April 30, 2026

Please **Support** 26-H 7760

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Thank you, Chair McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee for considering 26-H 7760, the Lila Manfield Sapinsley Compassionate Care Act. I am grateful to Rep. Ajello and all who have sponsored this legislation.

Sixty-five years ago, I believed I would never die. I was a Christian fundamentalist teenager, and I expected Jesus to return before my twentieth birthday. Then I would be raptured to heaven. Now, in my eighties, I know I'm going to die. No matter how much our beliefs may change in a lifetime, chances are that all of us will die. The only question is: How well will we die?

I'm a former pastor and hospital chaplain. I've seen people suffer long, painful deaths that they and their loved ones did not deserve. I've known people who ended their lives violently because they saw no alternative. This made death lonelier for them and multiplied the pain for others. I'm asking you to support this bill that would allow Rhode Islanders with terminal illness to receive medical assistance in dying.

Some of you on this committee – or your constituents – may hold religious beliefs that prevent you from seeking this medical assistance for yourself. You can recuse yourself from this vote due to your personal beliefs, but please do not violate the “soul liberty” of others that Roger Williams secured equally for all of us in the Royal Charter of 1663. Each of us should be allowed to make these private decisions for ourselves without other people forbidding us.

My cousin is an Episcopal priest and also a nurse. She has written about pleading one morning with the ethics committee at a nursing home in Indianapolis where her husband was dying more than a decade ago. She begged the committee to let staff stop feeding him as he had requested. No one on the committee even knew him, but they knew their own rules and voted unanimously against the request. So the staff bathed him, dressed and hoisted him in a hammock, into a wheel chair, took him to the dining room, and fed him pureed pancakes – not at all what he wanted. After he died, my cousin moved to California, where they now allow compassionate medical care in dying. She wrote recently that she had just witnessed a friend's assisted death with eight other friends gathered at her bedside. “It was powerful and a very good choice,” my cousin wrote. “The doctor who helped was sensitive and wise.”

None of us knows what kind of end we will face, but it would help so much to know that we and our loved ones could have an alternative to interminable pain in our final days. There's comfort in knowing we might be able to leave this life peacefully with loved ones gathered around us at home here in Rhode Island. When we're young, we rarely face these end-of-life questions realistically. Please don't let this opportunity slip away from us again. Thank you.

Anne Grant