Anabella Mayorga

From: Carly Johnson <cajohnson@nhpd.org>
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2026 4:50 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Cc: Rep. Boylan, Jennifer; Rep. Knight, Jason; Sen. Lauria, Pamela J.
Subject: Statement in support of the Lila Mansfield Sapinsley Compassionate Care Act (H7760)

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Chair McEntee and honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Carly Johnson, and I currently live in Burlington, MA. I grew up in Barrington, RI and hope to establish a family back in Rhode Island in the future.

I am writing to urge you to support H7790 (Ajello), which would establish the process to provide a legal mechanism whereby a terminally ill patient may choose to end their life using medication prescribed by a physician.

I have many friends and family that live in RI whom I want to have access to this crucial healthcare option. The ability to access medical aid in dying for a terminally ill person allows them the autonomy to take on the inevitable with less suffering. My close family friend, Leigh Anne Hohlstein, of East Providence, suffers from ALS. She has lost the ability to speak and will die slowly from her inability to swallow and eat in the future. This death generally happens from a series of medical crises which are extremely painful and upsetting to the patient and their family. This complete lack of control over their death makes a terrible situation worse.

Leigh Anne dedicated her life to helping RI residents improve their lives. She worked as a therapist for over 30 years, treating patients with eating disorders. She helped these patients take control of a horrendous illness that had overtaken their life. The control that her patients gained over their illnesses undoubtedly empowered them and brought them immense comfort.

Leigh Anne does not have the option to take control of her own terminal illness. Her children and her friends will have to watch her suffer. They don't have the comfort of knowing that she at least has the option to pass where and how she would like, through medicine prescribed by a doctor. Many patients with this type of ALS (bulbar onset ALS) resort to Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED), as this is their only option to accelerate their death in effort to stop the suffering. It is unfair to Leigh Anne that this is her only option to exert autonomy over her own life at this point. It is unfair to her children and everyone that loves her to have to watch her suffer so horrifically.

Studies show that many people who do gain access to this medication never even use it. It is knowing that they have this option that brings so much comfort to patients in the end of their lives. Any concerns of misuse or prescription of this medication should be quelled by this fact. There are many steps that a patient must go through in the process to gain access to this medication.

My hope is that you hear Leigh Anne's story and that you enact change to ensure that other Rhode Islanders with terminal illnesses will not suffer the same fate. The people of Rhode Island deserve to die with dignity.

Please pass this bill out of committee and to the House floor with a recommendation for passage.

Sincerely,
Carly Johnson, Esq.

Carly Johnson
Staff Attorney

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