

Support H7760 – Medical Aid In Dying (MAID)

My name is Jan Shapin and I have testified before this committee in the past supporting legislation that allows medical aid in dying. You know the statistics – 74% of all Americans prefer MAID as a choice that would allow terminally ill patients to choose the time and conditions of their death.

For me this is a matter of personal autonomy. Since the last time I testified before this committee I have been diagnosed with Parkinsons' Disease. There is no cure. No way to stop the progression of the disease. I'm told there is a 60% chance of dementia. 100% chance of progressive debilitating physical decline. It could be 2 years, it could be 5 years, but it is not 10 years before I can expect a wheelchair, almost on death's door, but not quite. Probably accompanied with cognitive decline, which will mean I am not of sound mind.

With Parkinsons', there is no line that says "six months to live" -- I just don't know. So, I've stopped routine screening that could detect cancer. A cancer diagnosis that leads to six months to live would be a blessing. A way to qualify for medical aid in dying in Vermont or Washington, DC even if it is not offered in Rhode Island.

I could buy a gun. That right is protected heavily in Rhode Island even if you are not of sound mind. I could use my car to drive off a bridge. I could attempt to starve myself, although the medical establishment would probably intervene. I could buy street drugs that could probably ensure my death but that seems morally unattractive.

For \$10,000 and a lot of paperwork I can go to Switzerland and end my life with dignity. Switzerland, among all the western nations, is the only one that does not involve the medical profession in allowing a person of sound mind to make the decision to end their life. I would have control of the time and place.

So, Rhode Island can take a moral half step and pass H7760. You folks on the Judiciary Committee know me. I am not some kook. You are looking at your future or someone you know, respect and love. Man up.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Shapin

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