

Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 7760 The Lila Manfield Sapinsley Compassionate Care Act

Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

My name is Melissa Rigamonti, and I am a resident of Barrington, Rhode Island. I am submitting written testimony in strong support of House Bill No. 7760, the Lila Manfield Sapinsley Compassionate Care Act.

I respectfully urge you to pass this bill so that mentally capable, terminally ill Rhode Islanders have the option to avoid needless suffering at the end of life.

I was diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer at age 41 with no signs, no long-term symptoms, and no warnings. This year I will reach my five-year mark, making me part of the roughly 14% who survive that long. During these five years, I have had more than 100 rounds of chemotherapy and multiple surgeries. My cancer is in my liver, left lung, lymph nodes, adrenal glands, peritoneum, and spine, and it was in the ovaries I have since had removed. There is no surgical cure available for me.

I have three children 16, 17, and 18 and they are my why.

I share these details so you understand my sheer will to live. I would quite literally do and try everything to gain years, months, or even weeks with my family. I want nothing more than to prolong my life. I continue to work full time. I focus on my health. I pursue standard medical care and additional supportive therapies that help me stay strong and keep showing up for my children.

I am asking you to pass this bill because what I do not want for myself or any other family is a prolonged, agonizing death when the outcome is already certain. I cannot fathom subjecting my children or husband to what the end of a cancer death can look like. For many people, the actively dying phase can take weeks: a slow decline, worsening pain, and the painful wasting that comes as the body shuts down.

I want the ability to plan to choose a time while I can still think clearly, speak for myself, and be present with them. I want to say goodbye and tell them they were the best thing that ever happened to me. I want to remind them to keep choosing joy and laughter, and that no matter what, I will always be with them. I want to tell them how deeply sorry I am that I may not get to help my daughter pick out a wedding dress, or be in the room when grandchildren are brought into this world, or be beside my kids as they learn how to navigate adulthood. The grief of those losses lives with me every day.

This bill is about compassion, autonomy, and safeguards. It would allow a terminally ill, mentally capable adult after a clear, voluntary request process and appropriate medical confirmation to receive prescribed medication to bring a peaceful death. It would not force anyone to choose this option; it would simply make it available to those of us who need it, alongside hospice and palliative care.

Living without me will be hard enough. I am trying to protect my children from having their last memories of their mother be weeks of active dying not even a shell of who she was in life. Please pass House Bill No. 7760 and give families like mine the option for a compassionate, peaceful end when medicine can no longer offer a cure.

Thank you for your time,
Melissa Rigamonti