

April 27, 2026

My name is Teal Rothschild. I am a resident of Providence, and a sociology professor at Roger Williams University in Bristol. I am speaking in support of the Lila Mansfield Sapinsley Compassionate Care Act (H7760) which allows for medical aid in dying in Rhode Island.

Your committee received written testimony from Leigh Anne Hohlstein (of East Providence). She was diagnosed with ALS in July of 2025. A once vibrant, caring, kind and funny mother of two is now declining rapidly before us. This disease has caused a quick deterioration in Leigh Anne's speech, which is now unintelligible. Swallowing is increasingly compromised and she already has choking and gagging episodes. She will very likely get aspiration pneumonia because she will not be able to keep food, liquid, and even her own saliva from getting into her lungs and causing an infection. Ultimate death from this illness comes after many medical crises over a long period of time. This is soul crushing, both for Leigh Anne and those of us that love her.

"Dying is hard work." Leigh Anne has texted to us. She has had to make financial arrangements for her 23 and 26 year old children, move her 90 year old mother into assisted living, and make provisions for her mother's care after her death. Leigh Anne would like to have some degree of autonomy, some level of control, over how the end of her life will be. Having the option of medical aid in dying would have provided immense comfort to her. Not having access to this option is an injustice to Leigh Anne and creates an additional burden and anxiety. "Dying is hard work".

Because there is presently no provision for medical aid in dying in Rhode Island, Leigh Anne's only option at this point is to engage in Voluntary Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED) to hasten death. This usually is painful and disorienting and can take some time. What terrible irony that a capable clinical psychologist who has worked for over 30 years helping her patients work through eating disorders now has the only option of denying herself food to have any agency over her last days. Let's make this just a bit easier for those in similar situations in Rhode Island with terminal illnesses. Please pass this legislation so that we can compassionately support those in Rhode Island who are in a similar position.

Respectfully Submitted,

Teal Rothschild

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