

TO: The Health and Human Services Committee

RE: LD 613

FROM: Mary E. Hobgood

10 Edgecomb Court

Portland, Maine 04103

207-747-5344

[mhobgood@holycross.edu](mailto:mhobgood@holycross.edu)

I am a Maine senior (born July 4, 1946) and I am writing in support of LD 613.

My understanding is that passing LD613 would allow my physicians to apply for a waiver of the 6 month death prognosis currently required to access MAID. This bill, a critical amendment to the Maine Death With Dignity Act, would allow me to die comfortably in Maine at a time of my own choosing.

I enclose below a brief synopsis of my medical history to support an argument for why this waiver allowed by LD613 would mean so much to me, not only in terms of increasing the quality of my death, but also in terms of increasing my peace of mind and my ability to enjoy the time left to me as I continue to age.

I have recently been diagnosed as being in the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease. As we know, Alzheimer's is a terminal diagnosis, but it does not have a 6 month or less death prognosis. With a waiver of the 6 month or less death prognosis, I believe I would have a more than excellent chance to become eligible for MAID in our state.

It is important to know that, even before this recent A.D. diagnosis, I have lived most of my life with two long-term, non-treatable conditions, fibromyalgia and dysautonomia. These

conditions will negatively affect the quality of my life moving forward even more than they are doing now.

Both conditions may be related to an acquired brain injury I was also recently diagnosed with, but have suspected for a long time.

Briefly, fibromyalgia is a condition that can include, as it does for me, chronic muscle and joint pain, balance issues and fear of falling, memory loss, and cognitive decline.

Dysautonomia is a condition that damages the autonomic (involuntary) nervous system. Dysautonomia causes multiple, often life-disrupting symptoms across the autonomic platforms (heartbeat, elimination, digestion, libido, balance, breathing, even sweating and crying, among others) that also worsen with age.

In addition, I have also been diagnosed with complex PTSD.

As a consequence of living so long with these worsening conditions, and of understanding that I am not eligible for MAID under current state law, for a decade or so now I have been vigilant for a plan that allows me some control over the timing of my death.

I am a person who enjoys life to the maximum extent possible, but I also know that I will one day realize that getting through the day, week or month is no longer worth the costs to me. In addition, now that I know I also have Alzheimer's Disease, I am even more committed to having an exit plan.

Therefore, a few years ago I experienced immeasurable relief when I realized I could use the practice of VSED to enable me to have some control over the time of my death. I suspect my physicians will be able to attest to my mental capacity to make my own decisions, and to my physical ability to self-ingest. Now the recent diagnosis of Alzheimer's is the terminal

diagnosis I need, even if not a 6 month or less end of life prognosis. Therefore, as of now I have only three of the four requirements to qualify for MAID in our state.

If, however, the legislature passes LD 613, it would seem I have all the requirements to ask my physicians to rely on their medical expertise and to have full use of their clinical judgement to determine if I need a waiver. The passage of LD 613 would be an incalculable gift to me because it would make it possible for me to be eligible for MAID in the state of Maine without having to go through with VSED, a wonderful resource but one that can also be a painful process in itself.

The passage of LD 613 would improve not only the quality of my death (quick medication with my loved ones surrounding me as opposed to an average of seven to fourteen days or more spent dehydrating myself to death, possibly without my west coast family present). It would also immeasurably improve the quality of my life now, as it would lift my heart and spirit to enjoy the time I have left beyond what I can only imagine now.

Finally, as one born right after World War II, I am among the first wave of baby boomers. Each successive year moving forward from 2026 means a tsunami of elderly, age 80 and above, will face the last years of our lives and our deaths. I have no doubt that I am not atypical.

I believe the quality of life and death for millions of our citizens, especially those fortunate to die in Maine, will be affected in an extraordinarily good and generous way if our health-care providers can exercise the full use of their clinical discretion to provide clarity on who needs a waiver. It is long time overdue to pass this bill.



Mary E. Hobgood  
10 Edgecomb Court, Portland, Maine 04103  
LD 613

TO: The Health and Human Services Committee  
RE: LD 613

FROM: Mary E. Hobgood  
10 Edgecomb Court  
Portland, Maine 04103  
207-747-5344  
mhobgood@holycross.edu

I am a Maine senior (born July 4, 1946) and I am writing in support of LD 613. My understanding is that passing LD613 would allow my physicians to apply for a waiver of the 6 month death prognosis currently required to access MAID. This bill, a critical amendment to the Maine Death With Dignity Act, would allow me to die comfortably in Maine at a time of my own choosing.

I enclose below a brief synopsis of my medical history to support an argument for why this waiver allowed by LD613 would mean so much to me, not only in terms of increasing the quality of my death, but also in terms of increasing my peace of mind and my ability to enjoy the time left to me as I continue to age.

I have recently been diagnosed as being in the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease. As we know, Alzheimer's is a terminal diagnosis, but it does not have a 6 month or less death prognosis. With a waiver of the 6 month or less death prognosis, I believe I would have a more than excellent chance to become eligible for MAID in our state.

It is important to know that, even before this recent A.D. diagnosis, I have lived most of my life with two long-term, non-treatable conditions, fibromyalgia and dysautonomia. These conditions will negatively affect the quality of my life moving forward even more than they are doing now.

Both conditions may be related to an acquired brain injury I was also recently diagnosed with, but have suspected for a long time.

Briefly, fibromyalgia is a condition that can include, as it does for me, chronic muscle and joint pain, balance issues and fear of falling, memory loss, and cognitive decline. Dysautonomia is a condition that damages the autonomic (involuntary) nervous system. Dysautonomia causes multiple, often life-disrupting symptoms across the autonomic platforms (heartbeat, elimination, digestion, libido, balance, breathing, even sweating and crying, among others) that also worsen with age.

In addition, I have also been diagnosed with complex PTSD.

As a consequence of living so long with these worsening conditions, and of understanding that I am not eligible for MAID under current state law, for a decade or so now I have been vigilant for a plan that allows me some control over the timing of my death.

I am a person who enjoys life to the maximum extent possible, but I also know that I will one day realize that getting through the day, week or month is no longer worth the costs to me. In addition, now that I know I also have Alzheimer's Disease, I am even more committed to having an exit plan.

Therefore, a few years ago I experienced immeasurable relief when I realized I could use the practice of VSED to enable me to have some control over the time of my death. I suspect my physicians will be able to attest to my mental capacity to make my own decisions, and to my physical ability to self-ingest. Now the recent diagnosis of Alzheimer's is the terminal diagnosis I need, even if not a 6 month or less end of life prognosis. Therefore, as of now I have only three of the four requirements to qualify for MAID in our state.

If, however, the legislature passes LD 613, it would seem I have all the requirements to ask my physicians to rely on their medical expertise and to have full use of their clinical judgement to determine if I need a waiver. The passage of LD 613 would be an incalculable gift to me because it would make it possible for me to be eligible for MAID in the state of Maine without having to go through with VSED, a wonderful resource but one that can also be a painful process in itself.

The passage of LD 613 would improve not only the quality of my death (quick medication with my loved ones surrounding me as opposed to an average of seven to fourteen days or more spent dehydrating myself to death, possibly without my west coast family present). It would also immeasurably improve the quality of my life now, as it would lift my heart and spirit to enjoy the time I have left beyond what I can only imagine now.

Finally, as one born right after World War II, I am among the first wave of baby boomers. Each successive year moving forward from 2026 means a tsunami of elderly, age 80 and above, will face the last years of our lives and our deaths. I have no doubt that I am not atypical.

I believe the quality of life and death for millions of our citizens, especially those fortunate to die in Maine, will be affected in an extraordinarily good and generous way if our health-care providers can exercise the full use of their clinical discretion to provide clarity on who needs a waiver. It is long time overdue to pass this bill.