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LD 613
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Health and Human Services Committee
132nd Maine Legislature
Room 209, Cross Building
111 Sewall St
Augusta, ME 04333

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

I'm Reverend Valerie Lovelace and I live on Westport Island. I'm the Executive Director of Maine Death with Dignity. I wholeheartedly support LD 613, and I urge you to do the same.

Maine's Death with Dignity Act imposes a minimum 17 day waiting period, even when a patient is already confirmed as qualified.

For most patients, that extra 17 days is bearable. But for some, it is not. And for a handful, that extra 17 days is a barrier to access.

The question at hand is this: Should a qualified patient be denied access because of a waiting period that leaves no room for clinical judgement in their care?

And that is the only question here.

A patient who is confirmed qualified on day 1 must wait at least 16 more days. A patient who is confirmed qualified by day 5 must wait at least 9 more days. A patient who is confirmed qualified by day 15 need only wait 2 more days. As written, a patient's deteriorating condition cannot be considered.

Qualified patients should receive their medication. Period. For a few, the delay makes it impossible for them to die in the way they had hoped—on their own terms.

The law requires physicians to use their clinical expertise to assess and confirm these patients' eligibility for aid in dying. Then it requires them to put the brakes on for up to seventeen more days, regardless of their patients' condition.

I have been at the bedside of over two dozen patients, supporting them with their families as they use their medication.

I can tell you not one of them wanted to be dying. The thing they all had in common was a desire to have agency over their circumstances and the disease that was killing them.

LD 613 honors the intended spirit of patient-directed care under Maine's Death with Dignity Act.

When it's my turn to leave this life, if I'm qualified for aid-in-dying medicine, I want my physicians to be able to waive the waiting period if my condition warrants that.

This is a simple amendment that will fix an unjustifiable barrier to qualified patient

access.

Please vote “ought to pass.” Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Valerie Lovelace
Executive Director, Maine Death with Dignity