



Testimony of Death with Dignity National Center

Bill: LD 613, Amendment to Maine Death with Dignity Act

Organization: Death with Dignity National Center

Name: Geoff Sugerman, Legislative Director

Position: SUPPORT

Chairs Meyer and Ingwersen, Members of the Maine Committee on Health and Human Services,

This testimony is submitted by the Death with Dignity National Center, a national organization that has been at the forefront of promoting medical aid in dying laws since the passage of Oregon's Death with Dignity Act in 1994. We stand in full support of LD613, which seeks to amend the Maine Death with Dignity Act's waiting period provisions.

Since Maine first passed its Death with Dignity law in 2019, we have seen that waiting period in some cases has acted as a barrier to access, forcing patients to wait as long as 17 days to be able to use the medication after they have gone through the process to become qualified. Maine state data reports show that for some patients the waiting period has prolonged their suffering and provided no medical benefit.

The process to become qualified under the Maine Death with Dignity Act is not changed by allowing physicians to waive the waiting period. Instead, it allows them to use their best clinical judgement in determining when the waiting period is a burden or barrier to the patient.

For some patients, once they have qualified, a waiting period only prolongs suffering and denies them the right to make their own decisions about the timing of their death.

A number of other states including Oregon, Vermont, Washington, Colorado, and California have already enacted changes to waiting period provisions, and the laws in those states have continued to operate impeccably in providing patients with the right

to make their own end-of-life decisions while maintaining the state's interest in ensuring any terminally ill patient seeking this option is qualified under the provisions of this act.

We urge this committee to pass LD613.

Thank you.

About Death with Dignity

Death with Dignity was at the forefront of the passage of the first Death with Dignity law in the country: Oregon's in 1994. Since then, Death with Dignity has continued highlighting the importance of ensuring everyone has the right to options in the face of terminal, painful death sentences, including cancer. Currently, Death with Dignity laws exist in 10 jurisdictions, including Vermont, New Jersey, New Mexico, Colorado, and Washington, D.C.