

## **Holly Dominie**

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### **Re: LD 613: An Act to Amend the Death With Dignity Act to Ensure Access by Qualified Patients**

**April 8, 2025**

Dear Chairpersons Ingwersen and Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

I write in unqualified support of LD 613. My late husband David Dominie had ALS. He had the bulbar onset type, a brutal, relentless disease that targets the upper nervous system. He died last November with medical assistance under Maine's merciful law. Two years ago, I could not have imagined the terrifying bodily agony and loss of control he would experience as he struggled to maintain the physical dexterity to administer the medication via his feeding tube when the 17-day waiting period was met.

Had this amendment been in place, he, with the help of his doctor, would have had agency over the timing of the medication. Had this amendment been in place, he, with the help of his doctor, would have reduced the unnecessary suffering of his final days when the disease accelerated suddenly, a surprise to both. Through the passage of this bill I hope you will give patients and their doctors the control and trust they need.

On the day of his diagnosis in 2023, David talked with his neurologist about his desire to end his life on his own terms with the doctor's help. He had read about ALS, and hopefully you will too. David knew his own physical limits; his claustrophobia terrified him. He educated himself about the limits of the law; he welcomed its' agency. He anticipated the progression of the disease--he willed his body to cooperate. He was brave. He lived with grace, humor, and moments of joy. He thought he had more time, yet his body failed catastrophically toward the end. When it did, meeting the waiting requirements of the present law proved excruciating.

While I could not have imagined the brutality of this disease, the trauma stays with me. I urge you to imagine yourselves or your loved ones in David's position and vigorously promote passage of this bill. I ask you to imagine being trapped in a body at once drowning and suffocating. Imagine being claustrophobic. Imagine, too, not being able to swallow, eat or drink orally, or even talk. Imagine not being able to expel toxic carbon dioxide from your bloodstream. Imagine the constant assault of muscle twitches, your body constantly overheated. Imagine the fear of losing the ability to push a syringe into your feeding tube while the 17-day waiting period was in force as your fingers weaken. Imagine realizing your life untenable but your suffering extended. Imagine your doctor helpless to make your last days bearable.

You and your colleagues have the opportunity to enable others and their doctors to avoid such a brutal passing. Please empower those dying and their doctors to take control over their final suffering. I implore you fervently: please vote LD 613 out of committee unanimously "ought to pass" and urge your colleagues in the Senate and House to do likewise.

Thank you,

Holly Dominie