

Stephanie McSherry  
Kittery  
LD 613

I am writing in support of LD 613, An Act to Amend the Maine Death with Dignity Act to Ensure Access by Qualified Patients. I urge you to vote for this important measure that will give physicians the right to waive the waiting periods before a patient can end his/her life – after they have qualified for Death with Dignity.

My partner, Erik Carlson, was diagnosed with Glioblastoma, an aggressive and incurable brain cancer, in April 2019. The average life expectancy for the disease is 18 months. In that time, Erik underwent two brain surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation. At that point it was determined that Erik had less than six months to live. He was in excruciating pain and unable to do the things he loved. In an interview with NewsCenter Maine's Cindy Williams, eight days before Erik died, he said, "I don't want just days; I want to be me."

When Erik made the decision he was going to access Death with Dignity, and called his doctors and psychologist to get their approvals, we had forgotten about the almost three-week waiting period. Erik was devastated. Anyone who has loved and walked beside someone with a terminal illness knows that the decision to access Death with Dignity is not one that is taken lightly. By the time Erik had made up his mind, he was ready to die. He was not going to change his mind during the two waiting periods.

These waiting periods made the last weeks of Erik's life more tortuous than the previous 18 months had been. Many times, I lay with him as he tried to will himself to die.

Since Death with Dignity was passed in September 2019, there has been no data to show that Mainers are abusing the law. The soul searching that it takes to come to such a decision, and the requirements to be qualified by one's physician to access Death with Dignity, should be safeguards enough. Please abolish the two waiting periods.

For more on Erik's story, please see:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50\\_F3yT\\_oDI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50_F3yT_oDI) and

<https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/life/life-after-death-with-dignity-in-maine/97-6e15c583-d1b2-4999-8615-d028e7831554>.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stephanie Noyes McSherry