

Regina Rooney
Testimony in Support of LD 613
April 11, 2025

Dear Sen. Ingwersen, Rep. Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Regina Rooney, I live in Hope, and I am testifying today as a private citizen in support of LD 613, *An Act to Amend the Maine Death With Dignity Act to Ensure Access by Qualified Patients*.

My support for Death With Dignity became personal when my mother came home on hospice with a rare and fatal mycobacterial infection in her lung. Lung disease of any kind is not pretty. In Mom's case, she had a huge and rapidly growing infection that was literally eating her tissue alive.

When Mom's hospice nurse told her about Maine's law, she was immediately in. She knew what was ahead of her. She wanted to live her life as long as she possibly could... But she also was determined to die as herself.

The path to obtaining her medication was far from smooth. Generally speaking, her doctors were willing to work with her, but many were uninformed and unsure about the law, adding to the time already required by the waiting periods and drawing out the process even longer. Time was a thing we did not have. Mom was headed to a point when her needs would exceed what I, her caregiver, could do for her. In that case, she would have had to go into the hospice home, where her painful decline would continue but where she'd no longer have the option to end her own suffering.

Because Mom was so sick, many of the logistics fell to me to manage. I remember wishing so many times that something, anything, about the process could be just a little bit easier. Because I wasn't only navigating this – I was sorting her pills, scheduling the nurse, turning her oxygen up and down, running for Ativan when her breath suddenly disappeared, and a million other heartbreaking things you do when caring for a loved one who's dying.

I will never forget her final appointment, when the doctor came to Mom's house and said, "This is a really hard decision to make." And my mother looked at her and said, with all the certainty and clarity in the world, "No it's not. Not if you're facing what I'm facing."

Mom got her medication. And on a beautiful, sunny, early spring day, she took it. The birds were singing, and Anne Murray was playing, and her children were gathered around and my mother was, at last, at peace.

LD 613 is an answer to the wishes I made that long winter. It would make this process just a little bit easier. The current law places an undue burden on patients and caregivers, delaying when sometimes, time really is of the essence. By the time we'd got Mom's meds, it was the difference of a matter of days before she'd have had to leave home and had her choice stripped from her.

For my mom, the choice was easy but the process wasn't. The act of a critically ill person choosing how they leave this world is life affirming. We should make this life affirming choice more accessible for those who need it. I ask you, in honor of my mother, to support LD 613.