

Good morning. My name is Clare Dalton, and I live in Portland.

My partner, Nicholas, was diagnosed with metastatic prostate cancer in 2008, and lived with it for 14 years before his death in 2022. For most of that time, because of ever-evolving treatment options, his life was good. But as he ran out of options, the last year of his life became a struggle, as the cancer ate away at his bones.

We were fortunate: we knew about medical aid in dying. We researched Maine's statute, and several months before his death he initiated the process. With the reassurance that the prescription would be there for him if and when he needed it, he endured the pain as long as he could, longer than I thought possible - his will to live was that strong. When the pain finally became unbearable, he ended his life: his two sons and I were with him, and it was a peaceful and beautiful ending; the one he wanted.

I am here to advocate for this amendment to the law, for two reasons.

First, no-one on our medical team: not our PCP, not our oncologist, not even our wonderful palliative care doctor, told us about Maine's Death with Dignity option. I can understand their reluctance, but the fact remains that if we had not initiated that conversation, it might never have happened. There are surely many who might benefit from it, who either don't know it even exists, or who do not understand what the process requires. And who might learn about it only when it is too late to help them - unless their doctor, confident that they meet the statute's other requirements, can waive the waiting periods currently built into the legislation.

My other reason for supporting this bill is that I would not want anyone to suffer the kind of pain that my partner suffered at the end of his life for a day longer than they needed to, or chose to. We had been reassured often that he would die in comfort, that his pain could be managed. He was in hospice care, and had many pain medications available to him. They left him nauseous and sometimes disoriented; they did not control his pain. I don't believe his was a unique case. If doctors, in appropriate cases, could speed the mandated process, and help their patients to a conscious and peaceful death, they would be relieving unnecessary suffering. By passing this legislation, you will make that possible.

Thank you.

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