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THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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LD 613 - "An Act to Amend the Maine Death with Dignity Act to Ensure Access by Qualified Patients"

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and my fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. As you know, my name is Marianne Moore. I proudly represent Senate District 6, which includes all of Washington County along with 16 Communities in Eastern Hancock County.

I am here today to testify in support of LD 613, *"An Act to Amend the Maine Death with Dignity Act to Ensure Access by Qualified Patients"*.

As the summary so well describes, *"This bill allows an attending physician to waive a portion or all of a waiting period for qualified patients to access end-of-life medication based on the qualified patient's condition and the attending physician's medical opinion regarding the best interests of the qualified patient."*

I will start out by saying I was one of the legislators who totally supported LD1313, the Death with Dignity Bill, that was passed in the 130th Legislature and signed by the Governor. A lot of hard work went into making sure all of the important guard rails were in place for such an important matter! Since it's passage, this proposed bill is the ONLY item that has come forward needing a tweak from the original language.

I know there are a lot of people who do not support the entire "Death with Dignity" concept. I respect their feelings; however, I would like to share several stories of families whose loved ones wish they had been given the opportunity to not prolong their extended terminal illness:

I will start out with my own story... In 1993 my father, at the age of 64, was diagnosed with inoperable colon cancer. He spent six months or so in treatment before he stopped chemo, choosing to live his life to the fullest. Thanks to the love and prayers of family and friends, his cancer went into remission. He regained his strength and proceeded to get his affairs in order. Fast forward 4 years later, the cancer returned and began to spread rapidly through his body. We watched him go downhill very quickly as his quality of life deteriorated. Under the care of the local hospice

organization, Daddy's pain was kept at bay with repeated morphine. Seeing him lying there dying, knowing that was not the way he wanted his life to end, was hard. He had made peace with death months earlier but was now incoherent of his condition. He would have been horrified to know he was wearing diapers AND that my niece, who was a CNA, was the one taking care of his most personal hygiene needs. I know in my heart, if Daddy had been able to direct his death with dignity, he would have left this world at peace with little pain.

Another story... As a Washington County Cancer Patient Navigator, I worked with an 82-year-old gentlemen who had been diagnosed with Stage 4 Lung Cancer. In efforts to delay the inevitable, the doctors (with good intentions) scheduled him for repeated chest x-rays, blood tests, breathing treatments, etc. I watched him deteriorate with pure exhaustion. In conversations with him, he was ready to give up, saying he just couldn't continue doing "this". As his "cheerleader", I encouraged him to hang in there, offering to help in any way I could. On the day he was scheduled for another breathing treatment, he drove himself to a back road about 5 miles from his home and shot himself. I truly believe had the Death with Dignity opportunity been available, his death would have been peaceful, surrounded by loved ones, instead of dying alone on the side of the road.

My final story I will share to illustrate why I support this bill is about a dear friend of mine who was my age. He was diagnosed with ALS in his early 50's. Through the next few years, we watched this cruel disease take away his ability to work, his mobility, his pride, and ultimately his ability to even do the simplest thing such as taking a drink of water. His devoted wife, a CNA herself, felt helpless as she watched the once strong viral husband she dearly loved deteriorate. His death was not a pretty one! I do believe he would have supported Death with Dignity rather than the way his life ended.

Each of these stories describe situations where, unfortunately, death was inevitable. Had the "Death with Dignity" option been available, along with this minor amendment to the statute, it would have allowed them to peacefully end their suffering, totally under their physician's medical opinion with their best interests at heart.

I ask for your support of this minor amendment to this statute! Thank you!