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**Testimony in Favor of LD613: An Act to Amend the Maine Death with Dignity Act
to Ensure Access by Qualified Patients**

My name is Peter Pfeiffer, and I am the uncle of your previous speaker and the brother of Rob Pfeiffer. I have been a logger in Somerset County for the last fifty years. I expect that line of work has influenced the way I think about things. When your job is moving heavy, dangerous objects from one place to another, there is no room for abstractions or ideologies.

My brother was no logger, but we shared this pragmatic approach to life. When it was clear that his cancer was going to lead inevitably to increasing pain and the loss of his independence, he chose a practical alternative. Watching him end his life was, without a doubt, the most painful moment of my life, and much worse for Sarah and her sister Kate. Nevertheless, I respect his decision and my testimony today is to honor the courage and dignity of his actions.

Sarah has explained that the process required to qualify for this law is not an easy one. Fortunately, my brother was able--physically, mentally and financially--to meet all the requirements. Others who are entering the last months of their lives are not. I implore you, do not make this process any more difficult. My brother, and others in his situation, are intelligent adults making what will probably be the most stressful decision of their lives. Please do not make this even more burdensome.

I'll close by speaking of my first exposure to Death With Dignity. Forty years ago I was watching an episode of 60 Minutes in which an aristocratic old Dutch woman, dressed with old fashioned elegance with a very complicated hair-do, discussed her decision to apply for the recently legalized right to die. She gazed down almost affectionately at a little silver vial that contained the lethal dose that would end her life. She said, "I don't know if I will drink it or not, but it gives me great comfort knowing that I can close the book if I need to."

This is a more humane way to understand this difficult and painful issue. Some might want to read the book to the end, come what may. Others, like my brother, might want to close the book short of the final chapter. Lord knows there are far more traumatic ways to close the book than the one he took. I beg you not to force people onto that path. I believe strongly that free and independent people should be allowed to make these decisions on their own, without restrictions imposed by government or religious organizations, as well meaning as they might be. Thank you.