

Written Testimony in Support of HB254
NH End of Life Freedom Act

January 29, 2025

Chairman Bob Lynn and the Judiciary Committee

I am writing to inform you of my unequivocal support for HB254.

March 24, 2021

That was the day my 68-year-old brother received this message from his doctor: You have Stage 1V terminal cancer. Left untreated, you could expect to live from three to six months. The right treatment could buy you some time, though whether that is months or years is something no one can say right now.

Shortly after this diagnosis, my brother, Chuck, started a blog chronicling his cancer journey. In his first entry he stated: "I am glad that Colorado has a medical aid in dying law. I may never avail myself of it, but there is a certain kind of reassurance in knowing it is there."

My brother did not want to die. He wanted to live. So he chose chemotherapy. Treatments lasted for a year, allowing many wonderful life experiences. But they also impacted the quality of his life, with many unwelcome and very unpleasant side effects.

Knowing that he would experience serious pain from his cancer was always on his mind. But countering that anxiety, was the knowledge that he had the option to die peacefully with medical aid when he felt the time was right, again, because in Colorado, where he lived, this was legal.

He and my family were comforted by his having that option, until about a month before his death when it became clear that he would not be able to use medical aid in dying because of the difficulty of securing the authorization from a required second doctor.

Ultimately, chemotherapy stopped being effective and treatments ended. After his last chemo infusion, the cancer quickly spread throughout his body and the tumors grew. The pain intensified. Hospice care was outstanding and was able to prescribe medications to ease his pain. But they could not eliminate it and he was in constant and often severe pain. His world was now confined to the room where he lay in the hospital bed. He was miserable.

I want to emphasize that my brother **wanted** to live and he did all he could to fight his cancer for as long as he could. But in the end, cancer won. The fight ended. Death would come and it would be accompanied with intense pain. What remained ahead of him was an indefinite length of time living in pain, having his body deteriorate and being totally

dependent on others. No more hikes with his dog. No more multi-day bike rides in the mountains. No more deep conversations with friends. This was not living. It was existing. At this point, having the legal right to use medical aid in dying, allowing for the option of a peaceful death with his family there to support him, was what all of us had wanted,

There's a tendency to equate medical aid in dying with suicide. I disagree. Using medical aid in dying for a compassionate and peaceful death is not my concept of suicide. The word – suicide- was never ever in anyone's thoughts, including my brother's. Suicide would have been the word to use if he had bought a gun and killed himself. But it was his **cancer** that ensured that he would die.

In my mind, suicide is a violent death. But medical aid in dying provides the option for a peaceful death.

Suicide is often a solitary and traumatic act. But medical aid in dying brings relief to the patient and his loved ones and allows for mutual planning for the end of life.

Suicide is usually a private or secret act. But medical aid in dying requires the patient to fill out a form and sign it in front of two witnesses. Two health care providers must determine eligibility. That was the check that stopped my brother's eligibility.

It is my hope that by passing this bill, people with a terminal illness will not have to suffer in lingering pain like my brother and so many more have had to do.

I thank each of you for your time and consideration of this important bill.

Respectfully,

Joy Blongewicz

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