

January 28, 2025

Dear State of New Hampshire Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kira Philips, and I am writing to ask you to please support and pass HB254, the *New Hampshire End of Life Freedom Act*.

I have been a passionate advocate for Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) since 2021, when I lost my beloved mom, Clare Philips, to suicide on June 3rd. That day will forever consume me, and the prolonged and complex grief caused by the manner of her death has impacted me and my dad profoundly. Early that morning, my mom ended her life by shooting herself in the head, in the shed in our back yard. My dad, her husband of over 40 years, had to find my mom, an image he will never be able to forget. I was still asleep when he came running up to tell me what had happened. Within 30 minutes there was a swarm of about ten police on our property, we were questioned by detectives, and they confiscated the letter she had left. In the coming days we had to hire a biohazard cleaning service and make arrangements for my mom with the funeral home, in which they told us there was “too much trauma” to do anything but cremation. I asked them if they could save a lock of her hair for me, and they said there was just too much trauma. My dad was shattered and has been left with functioning PTSD, anxiety, now has a psychiatrist, and sees a therapist. I lost my best friend, my hero, and my soul mate.

For some background, my parents are upstanding Americans, my mom was born and raised in Connecticut, where she lived her entire life. She was a graphic designer for Hartford Hospital for the majority of her career, but also loved the fine arts and was a talented painter. My dad was born into a working-class family in upstate New York. He was able to be a conscientious objector from the Vietnam War when his only sibling, his older brother, tragically died when my dad was 21. My dad graduated from Yale, went to UCONN Law, and was a lawyer in Hartford for over 30 years—providing a privileged life for me. I was adopted from China as an infant, and my parents were some of the first Americans to travel to China to adopt unwanted baby girls in the early 1990’s. This speaks to their selflessness, compassion, and kindness. Being raised by my parents is the greatest gift of my life, and I will forever be grateful for every opportunity I’ve been given thanks to them. My mom was truly the most gentle and loving soul, hence why her firearm suicide was so utterly shocking.

My mom was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma in 2018. She was being treated by oncologists at Dana Farber and Hartford Healthcare, but her diagnosis was tumultuous, in which she was in and out of hospice, had a period of remission, and then a quick decline. This period also coincided with the pandemic lockdown as well as the summer of 2020, when the country was experiencing political unrest after the death of George Floyd. During the pandemic I moved from New London, CT back to my parents’ home in Hartford, which is actually located directly behind the Governor’s mansion. The summer of 2020, we were facing daily Black Lives Matter and pro-Trump rallies, and other events such as Asian hate crimes and protests demanding Governor Lamont release all prisoners because COVID was spreading in prisons. These protests were literally happening in our neighborhood. My parents had never owned a gun before and were nonviolent people, so when my mom told us she wanted to get a gun it was shocking. However, given the societal unrest at the time, it actually seemed valid. That summer, my mom was in remission and she obtained a gun permit, took shooting lessons, and legally bought a small firearm, of which she kept hidden in the basement and I never actually laid eyes on it. I now see clearly that her intention for getting a gun was not for protection but to have it as a fast escape if her cancer progressed significantly, which it did by the beginning of 2021 when she stopped responding to treatment.

The Multiple Myeloma literally compacted my mom’s spine causing her to shrink a half a foot in height. It also caused severe, radiating back and pelvic pain, making it difficult to walk and then stand. I recall more than once having to watch her crawl up the stairs to the bedroom, which was heartbreaking. My mom endured a

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year– one whole year– of relentless nausea from the chemotherapy, and although she did not lose her hair, she developed a golf ball-sized tumor that protruded from her scalp. She was just a shell of her former self and the rate at which she physically declined was scary.

On June 1, 2021 my mom and dad drove up to Dana Farber and she was offered one last treatment option. CAR-T Cell Therapy is a highly invasive blood and bone marrow transfusion that would have required my mom to be in-patient for a month, followed by six months of being in close proximity to the hospital in case there were complications. This means my mom would have had to not only endure this treatment but also rent an apartment in Boston for six months. The therapy could have potentially given her some more months or year(s) of remission, but it was not going to cure her cancer. She just did not have the strength to pursue it after what she had already been through with radiation and chemo. My mom and dad also discussed moving to Vermont to legally pursue MAID, but given her prognosis she did not have enough time to gain residency (six months), nor did she have the energy to get an apartment and establish a new medical team there. Today, Vermont is one of two states that has lifted the residency restriction, and my mom could have gone there and died peacefully.

No one deserves to get cancer. No one deserves to watch their loved one suffer and die horrifically. No one, especially my mom, deserves to die violently, alone, on the cold, dark, concrete floor of a shed. It is now my life's mission to ensure that no other family unnecessarily experience this kind of trauma. Medical Aid in Dying is the preventative mechanism. MAID not only prevents terminally ill people from suffering at the end of life, but it prevents them from resorting to desperate, violent, and/or illegal methods. Additionally, it prevents having to watch a loved one suffer, and it prevents the trauma. My home state of Connecticut disappointingly did not have a bill proposed in the 2024 legislative session, but in the past year I have focused my energy on education and research. I was able to present to three groups of students at Brown University– the Brown Society of Bioethics and Health Humanities, the Brown Hospice Volunteer Organization, and undergraduate and masters students enrolled in Medical Sociology. I also am a research assistant for Dr. Elisa Kozlov, of Rutgers School of Public Health, and did data collection and abstraction of over 300 hospices' policies on MAID in states where it is legal. Our paper was sent out for publication, and we are hoping will be accepted soon. Lastly, I will receive my Master of Public Health from Brown in August, and am fully committed to this work in honor of my beloved mom.

I am respectfully imploring you to please be the 11th state to legalize this end-of-life healthcare *option*. New Hampshire residents dying from terminal illness deserve this right to freedom in death, if they so choose.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration,

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