

# Maryland physician-assisted suicide bill withdrawn from State Senate

**By Catholic Review Staff**

The lead sponsor of the Richard E. Israel and Roger “Pip” Moyer End-of-Life Option Act has withdrawn the bill – which would legalize physician-assisted suicide in Maryland – from consideration in the State Senate.

“The withdrawal of the bill that would have legalized physician-assisted suicide is a victory for all Marylanders, most especially those whose lives would have been rendered disposable by the bill’s passage,” said Archbishop William E. Lori, chairman of the board of governors for the Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC). The conference is the Annapolis-based legislative lobbying arm of the state’s Catholic bishops.

“As we give thanks for the defeat of this measure we also remember our call to give mercy, compassion and healing to those whose lives are nearing their natural end,” the archbishop added.

Jennifer Briemann, associate director for respect for life for the MCC, said in a statement that “it is a relief that this very dangerous bill is not moving forward again this year.”

The bill’s withdrawal by State Sen. Guy Guzzone, a Democrat representing part of Howard County, effectively ends, for the third straight year, the chance of physician-assisted suicide passing in the state. However, the MCC, which is the legislative lobbying arm of the state’s bishops, will continue to monitor the bill in the House of Delegates.

Pushed by Compassion and Choices, a Denver-based, multimillion-dollar organization advocating for nearly identical legislation in other states, the bill would allow doctors to prescribe lethal medications to terminally ill patients who want to end their lives.

“We are grateful to all of our coalition partners for working tirelessly on behalf of the intellectually and developmentally disabled, the elderly, the sick and the vulnerable to make sure this legislation was seen for what it is, a fatally flawed bill,” said Briemann.

The MCC is part of the Maryland Against Physician Assisted Suicide coalition, a group of healthcare professionals, disability rights advocates, mental health

professionals, advocates for seniors and members of faith communities in opposition to the legislation.

Briemann has been personally affected by the issue.

At a Feb. 16 hearing before the House Judiciary Committee and the Health and Government Operations Committee, she told legislators that her mother had been in the end stages of renal failure seven years prior, and certainly would have qualified for a fatal prescription, which the proposed bill would have limited to patients with a diagnosis of terminal within six months.

After several opinions confirmed the dire prognosis, a physician finally raised the remote possibility of a kidney transplant from a live donor.

Briemann, who herself provided the kidney for the successful transplant, said she has wondered whether her mother would have opted to end her life with lethal drugs, had the option been available.

"I'd like to think not, but with no requirement for family notification or no requirement for even a witness to be present when the medication is ingested, there's no way of knowing," she said, adding that her mother often spoke of feeling like a burden.

Now, the woman relishes time spent with Briemann's son, her grandson.

In the MCC statement, Briemann thanked the Knights of Columbus and "parishes from around the state" for their grassroots support in defeating the bill, proving "yet again that Marylanders strongly believe our state is not a state where this practice belongs."

The MCC said that it believes supporters of the bill will be back in 2018.

*This story will be updated.*

*Also see:*

Maryland legislators hear wrenching testimony on physician-assisted suicide