



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Public Health  
In Support of H.2246/S.1331 An Act Relative to End of Life Options  
By Carole Young Kleinfeld, LWV of Cape Cod Area, for LWVMA  
October 20, 2023**

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) supports H.2246/S.1331 *An Act Relative to End of Life Options*—a bill that would allow terminally ill, mentally capable adult residents of Massachusetts access to medical aid in dying. The League urges you to act favorably on this proposed bill.

After more than ten years of advocacy by physicians, social workers, religious leaders, legislators, and patients with personal narratives, the LWVMA believes that the time is right for Massachusetts to grant the option for a person with a terminal illness to request medical assistance from a licensed physician to end one's life peacefully. The LWVMA further supports the provisions in the currently proposed bill that detail safeguards against abuse for patients and for medical personnel. The League believes in individual liberties as established in the Constitution, including a citizen's right to personal bodily autonomy in medical treatment. People must be free to make healthcare decisions for themselves.

According to a March 2023 Beacon Research report, almost three out of four Massachusetts voters (73%) support legislation to allow adults with a terminal illness to have the option of medical aid in dying to end suffering and to die peacefully. The report finds strong support among key demographic groups of MA voters—from different political parties, age groups, and regions of the state, self-identified Catholic and Protestant voters, and voters with disabilities.

Moreover, seventy-nine percent (79%) of those polled supported the bill after understanding its safeguards, such as diagnosis/prognosis confirmation, medical consultation and counseling requirements, providing information about alternative options, age/residency restrictions, qualifications for witnesses, criminal penalties for coercion, options for medical personnel to opt-out of participation, and the requirement for requests for medical aid in dying to be both oral and written, along with prescribed waiting periods.

One active MA advocate for the End of Life Options Act bill is retired Falmouth physician Dr. Roger Kligler—a person with a terminal illness himself and one of many residents who have lent support for the measures included in the bill. As Kligler said in a Cape Cod Times interview on March 10, 2022, “Terminally ill people should be given a choice about how much suffering they are willing to endure in the last six months of their prognosis.”

Nationally, three-quarters of Americans (74%) support the option of medical aid in dying, according to a 2020 Gallup Poll. Studies show that, in the 25 years since Oregon approved the first Death with Dignity law in the nation, there has not been a proven case of coercion or abuse. Over the past decade, data from 10 additional states and D.C. with similar laws confirm this. Safeguards, such as those proposed in H.2246/S.1331-*An Act Relative to End of Life Options*, have been successful in protecting patients and their medical providers.

Please support choices for those patients with terminal illnesses to choose end-of-life care that most closely aligns with their personal beliefs, in consultation with their medical providers and spiritual counselors. The LWVMA, representing 44 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, urges you to act favorably on this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.