

Re. SB280

Jan 18, 2024

Dear Chair Faviola and members of Education and Health Committee,

I am a retired physician resident in Henrico and I have practiced Cardiology for 50 years, starting in 1972 at the Veterans Hospital and the Medical College of Virginia. I strongly support SB280.

At the beginning of my medical career I could not imagine any measure that would hasten a patient's death. During my long career I have witnessed many patients struggle with their pain and suffering in a prolonged slow death when curative and palliative treatments have failed. I have also seen my younger brother plead with his son to let him go when he was suffering multiple organ failure and facing mutilating surgery. My late colleague, Dr. Latane Ware, a very conservative physician who was honored with a citation by this legislature became an ardent advocate of patient autonomy in decisions regarding their own life after one of his close friends became involved in a murder suicide because he could not bear the suffering of his wife. Dr. Walter Lawrence, former Chairman of Oncological Surgery at VCU mentored hundreds of young surgeons and treated thousands of patients with cancer until his death at age 96. At the urging of these 2 eminent physicians the Medical Society of Virginia withdrew its opposition to Medical Aid in Dying and joined several medical organizations in a similar stance. Today most of the U.S. public as well as physicians support patient autonomy in matters of life and death and MAID is allowed in 11 U.S. jurisdictions including the District of Columbia. I have come to strongly support this bill if it includes appropriate safeguards including the benefit of appropriate pain management, palliative care and hospice care. Just the knowledge that one has control over one's pain can provide immense relief with few patients actually exercising the option. This is borne out by the experience in other States where this is allowed. I believe it is the rational and conservative position. It can prevent much pain and save unnecessary loss of life.

Best regards

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