



2024 CO-AGE Priority

Medical Aid in Dying (MAID)

The problem: Many older adults receive terminal diagnoses that presage a long, painful, and expensive process before death ensues. This impacts not just the individual but also their families, who suffer in agonizing powerlessness as they watch and care for their loved family member as he/she succumb slowly and painfully to an ultimate and inevitable death. A MAID law would allow older Georgians to know that they can choose, if they so wish, a path that will allow them to die with dignity and save their families from a lengthy, painful, and expensive process.

What other states are doing for this issue: Ten states (VT, CA, MT, CO, ME, NM, NJ, WA, OR, HI) and the District of Columbia have MAID laws and thirteen others have legislation pending. Only two-thirds of those who apply are approved for MAID in states that have such a law actually use the medication to end their lives - and one third opt not to use it though they qualify. One hundred percent of those who qualify say that having the choice available eased their dying process.

What this legislation would do: Legislation can be written in such a way that addresses some of the concerns about abuse of such a law, Most of the existing laws require: 1) A terminal diagnosis confirmed by two physicians; 2) The diagnosis must be one that will result in death within six months; 3) The patient must be able to self-administer the medication (This is being challenged by disability advocates in some states with MAID laws); and 4)The patient must be mentally competent to make the decision. MAID legislation would allow an elderly person, diagnosed with a terminal illness, to choose to avoid a painful, and drawn-out death that could also drain family financial assets. All of this can be avoided by MAID legislation that provides an elderly person a choice in how they die.

Helpful Resources: Georgians for End of Life Options (gaelo.org), founded and led by Phyllis Talley. GAELO is a statewide organization working to expand end of life options for all Georgians. Their goal is to ensure that every Georgian can define for themselves what quality of life they may have at the end of their lives. Death with Dignity (deathwithdignity.org) and Compassion and Choices (compassionandchoices.org). Both of those national organizations have been spearheading education and advocacy efforts across the United States.