



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Public Health
In Support of H.2505/S.1486 An Act Relative to End of Life Options
By Lucy Kennedy, Healthcare Specialist
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) supports H.2505/S.1486 *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 report these bills favorably out of committee.

After more than twelve 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.

Our dear friend and colleague, Carolyn Lee of Sudbury, who served as the LWVMA legislative specialist for natural resources for more than a decade, passed away in September 2024 from gastric cancer. Carolyn was unable to eat solids or eventually swallow, and withered away in pain. It was a grueling and gruesome experience. In her final weeks, she pleaded for aid in dying to be enacted so she could be relieved of her tremendous suffering.

Statewide polling results indicate support for the legislation. Tatishe Nteta, provost professor of political science at UMass Amherst and director of the University of Massachusetts Amherst/WCVB poll dated June 2024, discussed the results, indicating 67% of residents show support for aid in dying. According to Nteta, "...close to seven in 10 residents are in favor of providing terminally-ill patients with only a few months to live to make the decision to terminate their life."¹

¹ Coin Young, "Poll: Two-thirds of Mass. residents support medical aid in dying," State House News Service, republished by WBUR, June 4, 2024, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2024/06/04/medical-aid-in-dying-massachusetts-poll-support>

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.2505/S.1486-*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.

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