

Members of the committee, my name is Christine Mills and I'm from Plantsville.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 5417, An Act Concerning End-of-Life Care.

I am a certified geriatric care manager through the National Association of Certified Care Managers. I'm also an Advanced Professional with ALCA, the Aging Life Care Association. I recently started my own business called Silver Linings for Seniors, LLC. I provide older adults with the support, education and community resources they desperately need to make short and long term medical and financial decisions that ensure their quality of care and self-determination. Previous to starting my own business, I worked as a care manager for 7 ½ years at CT Community Care, Inc., serving older adults and persons with disabilities through the Home Care Program for Elders and Money Follows the Person program. I have proudly assisted hundreds of clients in maintaining a good quality of life while living in their home, but I have also seen clients pass away after long periods of suffering.

I'd like to briefly share with you one of my stories. Not about one of my clients, but about my grandmother. My mom's mom. She was living alone at the time she was diagnosed with terminal ovarian cancer. She moved in with our family so we could care for her. I sacrificed my bedroom, so she could have her own room. Day after day for two years, I watched her lose weight, lose her hair, lose her appetite, her dignity, and her will to live. She became incontinent of bowel and bladder. When she slept, she had nightmares and screamed things like "Don't hurt me anymore!"

My mother would kneel outside her bedroom door quietly praying the rosary, as my grandmother would cry in pain "I don't want to do this anymore. If this is what it's going to be like." She died in my bed.

Bill H.B. 5417 can give others like my grandmother and my clients, a choice in how and when they die.

The momentum is building across our country in support of bills like H.B.5417. Baby Boomers that I talk to are thinking twice about traditional practices, and asking their physicians for more progressive end of life options. We should all be able to make that personal decision with our families and physicians when the time comes.

Thank you for the opportunity to share, and to hopefully ignite a desire to move this important bill forward.

Respectfully,

Chris Mills, MA, CMC

