

60 REASONS TO SUPPORT NEW YORK'S MEDICAL AID IN DYING ACT



Geri Barish

Long Island, New York



Barish is pictured here with her son the night of his Bar Mitzvah, a week after she found out he had cancer. At the time, only she knew, she wanted her son and their family and friends to enjoy that special evening.

Reason #54

Because medical aid in dying is not giving up on life, but allowing us to make our own decisions when the time comes.

Because medical aid in dying is not giving up on life, but allowing us to make our own decisions when the time comes.

The pain of sitting with a loved one as they wait to die in agony never goes away. To this day, I can still hear my son gasping for breath. He would pray for his heart to keep going as he waited for a double lung and heart transplant, but ultimately he was turned down for the operation because of too much damage from more than a decade of cancer treatments. In the end, there was no hope and no one to help end his suffering.

While my son was dying, my mother was dealing with her own terminal breast cancer. She prayed to die so that her pain would stop, but there was nothing anyone could do. It is still difficult for me to talk about that dark time, when I traveled between bedsides and faced the unimaginable.

After losing my family members and my own diagnosis of breast cancer, I dedicated my life to eradicating cancer and helping cancer patients on Long Island. I am a founding member of 1 in 9: The Long Island Breast Cancer Action Coalition, and the founder of Hewlett House, a community resource center for all cancer concerns that services Long Island and the five boroughs. This safe haven for cancer patients, now in its twentieth year, has been witness to a lot of joy and a lot of pain. I have spent countless hours talking with people who are ill from cancer

and have been told there is nothing else that can be done. All of their treatment options are exhausted, and they are left without any choices.

Having the option of medical aid in dying is not giving up on life, but allowing us to make our own decisions when the time comes. I am a five-time cancer survivor myself, and I continue to fight every day against this disease. However, I know there will be a day—hopefully, a long time away—when my time will come and I cannot fight anymore.

Passing a bill to give us a choice at the end of our lives is a gift. We need to have the right to say goodbye to those we love and give them the messages we know they need to hear. We deserve to have the option to end our suffering when there are no other options left to us.

I support the Medical Aid in Dying Act and I urge my legislators to do the same.

To join our mission, email **Amanda Cavanaugh** at acavanaugh@compassionandchoices.org.

