

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

## Guillermo Chacon

President of the Latino Commission on AIDS, founder of the Hispanic Health Network and a cancer survivor, he supports medical aid-in-dying legislation.

New York, New York



### Reason #27

***Because as a Catholic who respects other people's faiths, I believe it's not for anyone to stand in the way of this compassionate option being available for someone else.***

**I** am a witness to what many New Yorkers face: needlessly slow and painful deaths.

Their pain is a reminder of my own journey, beginning in 2005 — when I was diagnosed with malignant colon cancer. Catheters, needles, machines and devastating treatment had no mercy on my body. They tore my soul apart. Thankfully, my family, loved ones, our Lord, Monsignor Oscar Romero and my saints gave me a second chance.

But I am deeply concerned about Latinos and fellow New Yorkers facing terminal illnesses such as cancer, HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening diseases who will likely suffer in agony when medical care no longer has the ability to treat the condition or offer any other options, then facing the end of life.

I strongly believe New Yorkers living with a health condition without cure should have the option to make end-of-life care decisions that are right for them when the time comes, in consultation with their loved ones and faith leaders. In the final stages of a terminal illness, this must be allowed as an option.

I commend New York legislators for considering a medical aid-in-dying law that would honor the autonomy of terminally-ill individuals, with total control of their mental and cognitive capacities to decide how and when to die, when death is inevitable.

I recently met the mother of Miguel Carrasquillo, a terminally ill Puerto Rican and former New Yorker, who recorded YouTube videos of himself advocating for this option. Miguel worked at Manhattan's own Tavern on the Green.

The 35-year-old former chef was dying of brain cancer when he recorded videos in English and in Spanish to urge fellow Latinos to support medical aid-in-dying legislation in New

York and throughout the country. Unfortunately, Miguel had to move back to his native Puerto Rico, where his parents cared for him before his agonizing death in June 2016.

I never met Miguel, but I was honored to meet his mother. I want to honor Miguel's memory by stepping forward to support his desire for anyone facing a terminal illness to have options in their lives. That's why the Latino Commission on AIDS and the Hispanic Health Network formally endorse the New York Medical Aid in Dying Act that would allow all terminally ill New Yorkers to peacefully end needless, intolerable suffering at life's end.

While I am blessed today to call myself cancer-free, I would want this

compassionate option to become law if my cancer ever came back.

I understand this end-of-life care option may not be for everyone. Many terminally ill people have different opinions about what decisions are right for them in the final stages of a terminal illness

But as a Catholic who respects other people's faiths, I believe it is not for me to judge someone else. Until one walks in another person's shoes, it's not for anyone to stand in the way of this compassionate option being available for someone else.

**The harsh reality is that no matter how hard we try, we cannot escape the cycle of life and death. My belief is that if the time comes when we can't bear the suffering that afflicted people like Miguel Carrasquillo and so many of my friends who died of AIDS or cancer, a merciful God will understand that we all should have the option to die peacefully and with dignity.**

To join our mission, email Amanda Cavanaugh at [acavanaugh@compassionandchoices.org](mailto:acavanaugh@compassionandchoices.org).

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