

To: Interested Parties

From: GBAO

Date: February 11, 2020

Delaware Statewide Research – Key Findings

There is broad support among Delaware voters for legislation ‘that would give terminally ill patients with decision-making capacity the right to take medication to end their own lives’ – support that includes majorities across the partisan, demographic, and geographic lines that typically divide First State voters. What’s more, the intensity on this issue is overwhelmingly with supporters of the legislation. Overall, 72 percent support the legislation, including 50 percent strong support, while just 20 percent oppose it, including 13 percent strongly oppose. While there are some differences along traditional dividing lines within the electorate, the breadth and depth of support across the state is striking:

HB 140 Description	Total	Dem	Ind	GOP	Wilm	NCCo	Kent	Susx	White	AfAm
Support	72	72	75	67	77	70	71	69	77	58
Oppose	20	16	20	27	13	20	20	28	17	24

GBAO conducted a statewide survey of 781 likely November 2020 voters, which included a representative statewide sample of 517 likely voters, plus oversamples in two State Senate districts – District 1 (182 likely voters) and District 4 (141 likely voters). In the two Senate districts we oversampled, support for the proposed legislation was even higher than it was statewide – 75 percent support/20 percent oppose in SD1 and 78 percent support/17 percent oppose in SD4 – including majorities in both districts expressing strong support.

This support for so-called ‘end-of-life options’ or ‘aid in dying’ legislation is grounded in broad values, as well as very personal feelings should voters be forced to face such a situation in their own lives. Thinking broadly, we asked respondents whether they ‘favor or oppose allowing an adult with decision-making capacity, who is dying of a terminal disease with no hope of recovery, the right to bring about their own death.’ By a measure of 5-to-1 (75 to 15 percent), Delaware voters said they favor such an approach, including more than 2-in-3 voters across virtually every subgroup in the electorate. In our targeted Senate districts, support stood at 78% in SD1 (56% strongly favor) and 80% in SD4 (55% strongly favor).

Shifting to a more personal perspective, we asked each respondent if they would want a legal option to end their own life if facing a terminal diagnosis. Once again, the result was unmistakable – 66% say they would want that legal option while just 18 percent would not. On this question, the greatest differences we see are on age, with support for the legal option actually increasing with age – just 58% of those under 30 years old say they would want a legal option, compared to 67% of those ages 50-64 and 71% of those ages 65 or older.



Looking beyond the broad description detailed above to specific details of the proposed legislation, we find that support for each of these specific aspects of the plan meets or exceeds support for the overall proposal, and there is once again surprisingly little differentiation along traditional dividing lines:

- ***An insurer or health-care provider may not deny treatment or alter health care benefits otherwise available to terminally ill patients eligible to receive aid-in-dying medication.***
 - 78 percent favor, 66 percent strongly favor statewide
 - Strongest support – 85 percent favor among Independent voters under 50
 - Weakest support – 59 percent favor among those who regularly attend religious services (still a clear majority)
- ***Health care providers acting in good faith and in accordance with the law to honor a terminally ill patient's request to end their life would not be subject to criminal or civil penalties.***
 - 77 percent favor, 65 percent strongly favor statewide
 - Strongest support – 86 percent favor among voters under 30
- ***The decision to end one's life must be made voluntarily by the patient, not by a relative or guardian, and not through an advanced directive.***
 - 77 percent favor, 59 percent strongly favor statewide
 - Strongest support – 86 percent favor among women under 50
- ***One other doctor beside the one prescribing aid-in-dying medication must confirm the patient's diagnosis and prognosis of six months or less to live, and inform the patient of possible alternative medications.***
 - 79 percent favor, 56 percent strongly favor statewide
 - Strongest support – 89 percent favor among voters under 30
- ***A patient will be prescribed aid-in-dying medication only if they make two verbal requests to their doctor fifteen days apart and provide a written request signed in front of two witnesses.***
 - 70 percent favor, 46 percent strongly favor statewide
 - Strongest support – 82 percent favor among voters under 30

Because the anticipated vote on HB 140 could become an issue in political campaigns later this year, we asked voters how this issue would impact their vote if they generally agreed with a candidate on most issues but disagreed with their vote on this proposed legislation. Overall, a majority of likely voters (52 percent) said this issue would not change their vote and they would still support the candidate with whom they agree on most issues. Among opponents of the proposal, 51 percent said it would make them more likely to vote against that candidate, while only 18 percent of supporters of the proposal said the same. However, because supporters outnumber opponents by nearly 4-to-1, this means any political peril in November regarding this issue lies disproportionately with legislators who oppose the proposed legislation.