

Boston Ethical Community
P.O. Box 381934
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02248

October 27, 2015

The Honorable Representative Kate Hogan, Chair
Joint Committee on Public Health
MA State House, Room 130
Beacon Hill, MA 02118

Dear Representative Hogan:

The Board of Trustees of the Boston Ethical Community (formerly the Ethical Society of Boston) wishes to convey to you and to the members of the Joint Committee on Health Care that we enthusiastically support House Bill 1991. We urge you and your colleagues on the Committee to support this bill that seeks to endow Massachusetts' residents with an option to address end-of-life issues with compassion and choice.

The Boston Ethical Community (BEC) is a humanistic and educational movement inspired by the ideal that the ultimate aim of human life is working to create a more humane society. BEC has been active in Massachusetts for over 60 years, as part of the Ethical Culture movement that began in the 1870s. BEC may align with social issues it deems critical to the betterment of society and to the individuals of that society. We support the issue of ensuring death with dignity as determined by the conscious decision-making of those facing certain terminal illness. We believe that the HB 1991 does so, and includes important safeguards to ensure that an individual with a clear terminal condition has the sole ability to determine such action for him or herself.

This spring, many of our members have signed statements of support for HB 1991 to submit to their representatives in the MA House and Senate. We will attend the hearing at the State House on October 27th; we know that supporters of this bill will offer compelling testimony, as they did in 2013. We urge you to listen to their facts and personal stories, and honor their commitment with your support.

The examples of Oregon and Washington, and now California, in making such an option available are important to consider and we encourage you to investigate those experiences. The brave struggle of Brittany Maynard who faced a devastating illness and who, with her family, made this choice to ensure her peaceful end, is also compelling. We believe that the tide is turning, and as baby boomers age, assist their parents with medical needs in old age, and face their own aging, they will advocate for and demand a kinder, more compassionate end-of-life. This bill must be brought to a wider population in State House and in Massachusetts for discussion and debate. The time is NOW!

We urge you to report HB 1991 favorably out of committee to ensure that the important public dialogue on this issue can continue. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Brian King, President
Boston Ethical Community (on behalf of the BEC Board of Trustees)