



50 REASONS TO PASS NEW YORK'S MEDICAL AID IN DYING ACT





A LETTER FROM NEW YORK CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR CORINNE CAREY

New Yorkers are asking you to take up and pass the Medical Aid in Dying Act (A4321-A/S6471), compassionate legislation that would authorize medical aid in dying as an end-of-life care option. Medical aid in dying allows a terminally ill, mentally capable adult with six months or less to live to request a prescription from their doctor they can take when their suffering becomes too great to bear and die peacefully.

At the beginning of the legislative session this year, we promised to share with you a reason to pass this bill every day you were in session. Sixty people – some of whom are no longer with us – sharing their stories with you about their own suffering, or the suffering of their loved ones. As the session draws to a close, we're sharing the first 50 of these reasons, but know that they represent just a fraction of New Yorkers who are today suffering in their final days and weeks.

Our campaign to build support for this bill and educate New Yorkers about their end-of-life care options has taken us from Buffalo to Brooklyn, from Montauk on Long Island to Malone in the North Country, and we've listened to thousands of New Yorkers. What we learned is that the desire to prevent our loved ones from suffering unnecessarily is universal. It spans all demographics, including party lines and religion.

Far too many New Yorkers are suffering as they approach the end of a life cut short by cancer, neurodegenerative diseases like ALS and Parkinson's disease, or some other terminal illness.

For some of these people, a prescription for medical aid in dying – or just knowing it is an option – is a way to regain a sense of power over their healthcare decisions, after terminal illness has robbed them of any sense of control. In the words of one of our terminally ill supporters, medical aid in dying is like a hand at the top of the stairs; when the long days of treatment and dealing with side effects take their toll, she envisions medical aid in dying as a hand at the top of the stairs extended to reach hers, giving her the strength to deal with as much suffering as she can bear as she climbs to the top.

Suffering. That's a word you'll read a lot in the stories of these brave, fierce, vibrant New Yorkers.

Many recount their experiences caring for and ultimately saying goodbye to a parent, spouse, partner, friend. The heartbreak of not only losing a loved one, but watching them suffer or beg for help to die, and the toll that takes on those left behind.

Some people who have died during the course of this campaign describe the suffering they experienced as they were dying, and why having the option of medical aid in

dying was so important to them, even as they tried to live life to its fullest and seek out every possible treatment option to stay alive. These New Yorkers suffer needlessly, watching terminally ill people in other states, most recently New Mexico in April, gain the right while some lawmakers -- sometimes even their own representatives -- declined to meet with them.

And still others who are choosing to use precious time in their final weeks and months are asking you to listen to their pleas and give them the peace of mind this option would provide. If you don't take action to pass New York's Medical Aid in Dying, they die suffering.

But there is another way.

With more than 1 in 5 people in the U.S. now living in a jurisdiction where they have access to medical aid in dying, more and more New Yorkers are sharing their stories with us about the peaceful deaths their loved ones who live in other states like New Jersey, Maine and Vermont have had with this end-of-life care option. These stories are here too: how the law in other states gave families the ability to gather to celebrate a life well-lived, and allow the dying person to pass peacefully, on their own terms.

I urge you to consider these reasons, these stories about real New Yorkers and their families. They will touch your heart. They will move you.

If you still have questions about the [safeguards](#) included in the law, the broad [public support](#) for it, [how it's worked in other states](#), what studies conducted over the course of a quarter of a century since Oregon first passed a medical aid in dying law say, or anything else, we are a phone call or an email away. Or, you can find answers to your questions in this [comprehensive resource book](#). Please note that since the completion of this resource book, the health departments of [Colorado](#), [Maine](#), [New Jersey](#), [Oregon](#) released their 2020 data on utilization of medical aid in dying.

Let me leave you with this acknowledgement: medical aid in dying will not be the right option for everyone.

Please keep in mind that if you pass this law, nothing changes for those who have strong objections to it. The bill is explicit in ensuring that no one -- no doctor, no patient, no pharmacist -- is obliged to participate in it.

But for terminally ill New Yorkers who qualify for medical aid in dying and want this option, it's the difference between a death rife with suffering and a peaceful one.

You have the power to stop the suffering of real terminally ill New Yorkers right now by passing this bill. We hope you use your power to do that. Now. This session.



Jennifer Milich

has metastatic kidney cancer and is advocating for medical aid in dying in her home state of New York.

Buffalo, New York

Reason #1

Because this isn't about politics. It's about peace at the end of life.

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Dr. Jeff Gardere

New York, New York

Reason #2

Because those who are chronically subjected to health disparities deserve to learn about and have access to end-of-life options that can help them achieve peace, comfort, and dignity at the end of life.



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Bernadette Hoppe

A Buffalo-based attorney, Bernadette Hoppe (1965-2019) urged New York lawmakers to authorize medical aid in dying while facing terminal cancers.

Buffalo, New York

Reason #3

So that no one's final weeks are spent worrying about possible uncontrollable suffering at life's end.

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Nancy Murphy
 Vermontville, New York

Reason #4

So that families can come together and celebrate a life well-lived as a loved one transitions on her own terms.



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Gene Hughes
 An advocate for the rights of those living with disabilities who believes that personal autonomy should also apply to end-of-life decisions
 Utica, New York

Reason #5

So that at the end of my life, I have the autonomy that I fought so hard for since my first day in a wheelchair.



Patty O'Connor
 Saw her brother, Jim, struggle with limited end-of-life options
 Milan, New York

Reason #6

So that no one's brother has to die alone to protect his family from prosecution.



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Ed O'Connor

Following his brother-in-law's death, saw his sister struggle with limited end-of-life options

Milan, New York



Reason #7

So that no one's sister has to research the best way to take her own life.

Janet Duprey

Former Republican member of the New York State Assembly (District 115)

Peru, New York



Reason #8

So that no family has to watch their mother starve to death for 11 long and torturous days.



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Dr. Al Giwa

New York, New York



Reason #9

Because I have had patients who have suffered needlessly at the end of life, despite our best attempts to deliver excellent palliative care.



Kyra Te Paske
Albany, New York

Reason #10

So those who believe in a loving god can deliver themselves into God's hands, exercising their own free will to end needless suffering.



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Robert Milch, M.D.



The co-founder of Hospice Buffalo (1978) and an internationally recognized palliative care provider, Dr. Milch supports medical aid-in-dying legislation.

Buffalo, New York

Reason #11

So that a physician can honor their compassionate and ethical commitment to a patient's autonomy.



Rachel Rimmel
Brighton, New York

Reason #12

So that a young father facing death can create an end-of-life experience that leaves their children with a powerful memory.



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Father Luis Barrios

A priest, certified medical examiner and college professor, Fr. Barrios supports medical aid-in-dying legislation

Manhattan, New York



Reason #13

So that everyone can die in a way that's consistent with their own faith, values, and beliefs.

Janet Green

Watched her partner, Harry, die in pain

Poughkeepsie, New York



Reason #14

So that no one has to stand by helplessly as their husband repeatedly pleads: 'help me die.'



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Fay Hoh Yin (1932-2020)

Brooklyn, New York



Reason #15

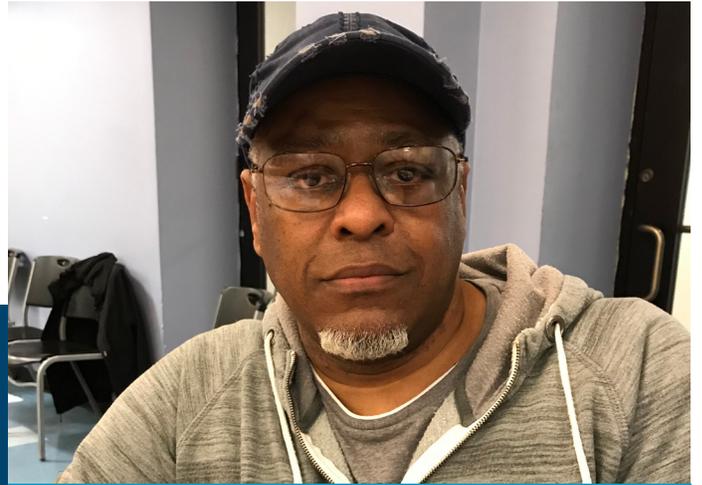
Because giving me the option of medical aid in dying would free me to spend all my remaining energy just living, knowing that I would not end up in a dark hole of suffering.

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Anthony Randolph

Changed his mind about medical aid in dying after witnessing the death of his brother

The Bronx, New York



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Reason #16

So that no one has to watch their strong Marine brother wither away in a hospital bed and suffer needlessly at the end of life.



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Rev. Dr. Richard Gilbert

A retired Unitarian Universalist minister, Reverend Gilbert supports medical aid-in-dying legislation.

Rochester, New York



Reason #17

Because sometimes the greatest reverence for life is to end human suffering.

Dr. David Pratt

A board-certified internist with subspecialty certification in pulmonary medicine and preventive medicine, Dr. Pratt served as Commissioner of Public Health Services for Schenectady County from 2009-2012.

Rexford, New York



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Reason #18

So that no one's Thanksgiving dinner ends with a shotgun to the head in the barn out back because nothing else could provide relief.



John Picarello

Brooklyn, New York

Reason #19

So that all New Yorkers have the opportunity to be masters of their own fate.

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Amanda Cavanaugh

Her partner, Chrissy, was unable to die in accordance with her values

Watervliet, New York



Reason #20

So that no one has to give that last dose of morphine and carry the burden of believing you've just ended your loved one's life.

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Susan Barra

Rochester, New York

Reason #21

So that when you know your time in this world will be cut short, you can live your life with less fear and more joy.

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Myra Shulman

Her mother, Beverly, used medical aid in dying in California.

Ithaca, New York



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Reason #22

So that a beloved mother has the option to lie in her own bed, in her own home, held by her family as she takes her final breaths.



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Laurene Gilbert

Her husband, Steve, wasn't able to die in accordance with his values

Ithaca, New York



Reason #23

So that no one has to deal with the horror of her husband's failed attempt to end his own life.

Art Caplan, Ph.D.

Professor of bioethics at NYU's Langone Medical Center and founding director of NYULMC's Division of Medical Ethics, Dr. Caplan supports medical aid-in-dying legislation.

New York, New York



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Reason #24

Because an ethical review of the evidence and experience of over more than two decades has shown that there is absolutely no cause for concern.

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Susan Rahn

A longtime advocate for medical aid in dying living with terminal cancer.

Roschester, New York



Reason #25

So that no one is forced to be at someone else's mercy for pain management and comfort care at the end of life after enduring countless treatments, procedures, and side effects in order to live as long as possible.

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Florrie Burke

Manhattan, New York

Reason #26

So that after more than 30 years of a vibrant life together, no one has to remember the final moments of a life well-lived as ones spent in agony.



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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.

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Peggy Lang

Her mother, Helen, was unable to die in accordance with her values.

New York, New York



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Reason #28

Because requests for medical aid in dying are not a failure of hospice or palliative care, they are an opportunity to improve the end-of-life care experience.



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Avery Ross

Harlem, New York



Reason #29

Because, while we didn't have a lot to say about how we got here, each of us should have autonomy in our decisions about how we leave.

Robert Pardi

Life coach and Adjunct Professor at the Swiss School of Management in Rome.

Wantagh, New York



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Reason #30

So that all New Yorkers can determine how they manage their disease and last days.

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Eve Eliot

A humorist and author whose husband, Jim, died using VSED

Long Island, New York



Reason #31

So that no New Yorker is left with only one option: starving themselves to death in order to have any end-of-life autonomy.

Ida Schmertz

Supporter living with a life-limiting illness

Manhattan, New York



Reason #32

So that someone who has faced serious illness with resolute dignity and a will to keep living as long as she can is afforded the same dignity of the option to die on her own terms when there are no more treatment options left.



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Carol Holochwost

Both her mother and mother-in-law did not die in accordance with their values.

Southampton, New York



Reason #33

Because even excellent hospice care can't alleviate all suffering.

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Bonnie Rose Marcus

Her fiancé, 9/11 first responder Jay Kallio, was not able to die in accordance with his values.

Brooklyn, New York



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Reason #34

So that no one has to die in agony despite receiving world-class palliative care at a top NYC hospital.



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Scott Barraco

His partner, Cathy, wasn't able to die in accordance with her values

Rochester, New York



Reason #35

So that no one has to worry when they open the front door that they'll find their girlfriend has taken her own life.

Lindsay Wright

Her husband, Youssef Cohen, was forced to choose between a painful death or leaving the home they shared

Manhattan, New York



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Reason #36

So that no one has to leave the home they love, their family, and their friends to die on their own terms.

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Cara Brittieri

Cara's sister Lisa (pictured here) died in agony on Easter Sunday 2018.

Lakewood, New York



Reason #37

So that no one is in the other room begging a doctor to increase pain medication when a loved one who asked for help to die takes her final breath.

Laura Kelly

Watched her father die suffering from colon cancer

Mount Kisco, New York



Reason #38

So that no one's strong Irish Catholic dad has to beg for help to die.



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Kristin Chambers

Her brother, Mark Chambers, utilized medical aid in dying in Washington

Olean, New York



Reason #39

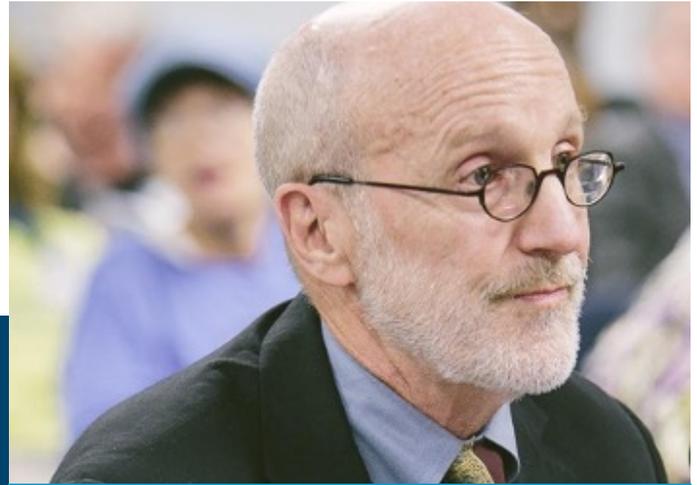
Because New Yorkers deserve the same option of a peaceful death that my brother had because he lived in Washington State.

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Dr. Timothy Quill

A physician specializing in palliative care at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Dr. Quill supports the New York Medical Aid in Dying Act.

Rochester, New York



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Reason #40

So that doctors can respond to each person's unique clinical circumstances using their values and preferences rather than the doctor's own.



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Barbara Thomas

Her husband, Bob, was unable to die in accordance with his values

Saratoga Springs, New York



Reason #41

So that no one has to hear their husband ask her to shoot him to end unbearable suffering.

Dr. Jay Federman

A family physician from Saranac Lake and medical director for the Tri-Lakes division of High Peaks Hospice, Dr. Federman supports the New York Medical Aid in Dying Act.

Saranac Lake, New York



Reason #42

Because authorizing medical aid in dying brings conversations about end of life out of the shadows and leads to improvements in end-of-life care for everyone, even if they don't use the law.



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Stacey Gibson

Her husband, Sid, was unable to die in accordance with his values



Garrison, New York

Reason #43

So that no one has to watch her once-vibrant husband starve to death.



Monona Yin

Brooklyn, New York

Reason #44

So that no one's daughter is robbed of precious, sacred time with their mother because of fear of suffering.



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Shannon Wong

Hudson Valley, New York



Reason #45

So that a daughter's promise to her mother that she won't have to suffer can be honored.



Naomi Edmondson

Brooklyn, New York

Reason #46

Because health justice means allowing people agency at the end of their lives.



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Betty Rollin

New York, New York

Reason #47

So that no one has to consider breaking the law to grant their loved one's last wish: to die in peace without needless suffering.



Debbie Stern

A supporter living with terminal cancers myelodysplastic syndrome and myeloproliferative neoplasm disorder, a type of leukemia

Williamsville, New York

Reason #48

Because knowing I have the option of a peaceful death when all else fails will improve the quality of the time I have left.



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Jaime R. Torres, DPM, MS

Former Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and president of Latinos for Healthcare Equality, Dr. Torres supports the New York Medical Aid in Dying Act.

New York, New York

Reason #49

Because preventing doctors from prescribing medication to a dying patient that they can take to end their lives peacefully causes unnecessary suffering and harm.

Ronald Thomas

Watched his husband, William Stubing, die without access to medical aid in dying

New York, New York



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Reason #50

So the last moments of a loved one's life can be spent embracing them.

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