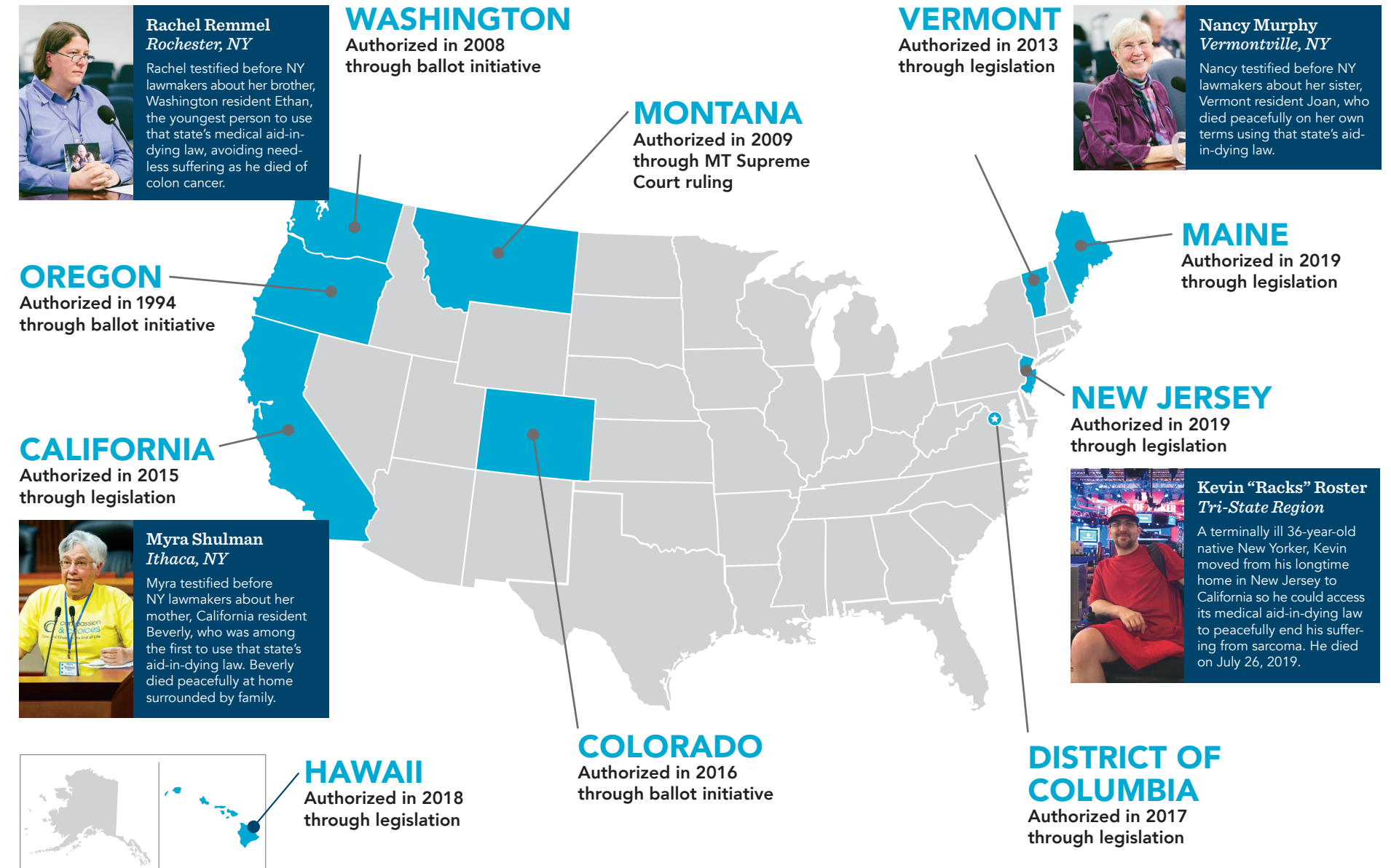


# What Is Medical Aid in Dying?

A trusted and time-tested medical practice that allows a terminally ill, mentally capable adult with a prognosis of six months or less to live to request from their doctor a prescription for medication they can decide to self-ingest to die peacefully in their sleep.

## Where Is It Authorized?

Compassion & Choices has led or supported campaigns to authorize medical aid in dying and implement this medical practice in **9 states and Washington, D.C.**



# Doctors and Faith Leaders Support Medical Aid in Dying



**David Pratt, M.D.**  
Rexford, New York

Internist, lung specialist and primary care physician with experience in outpatient palliative care; former commissioner of Public Health Services in Schenectady County.

“Medical aid in dying honors autonomy, gives options, affords dignity and is true to the ethical principle of beneficence ... This is an urgent matter for many New Yorkers ... let’s honor their autonomy and provide them this crucial option.”



**Robert Milch, M.D.**  
Buffalo, New York

Cofounder Hospice Buffalo (1978); internationally recognized palliative care provider.

“This legislation would allow terminally ill New Yorkers to die without suffering in whatever way is coherent with their own values and beliefs.”



**Fr. Luis Barrios**  
New York, New York

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

“I believe that our state should adopt a law that would allow terminally ill New Yorkers to die without suffering, in whatever way is consistent with their own individual faith, values and beliefs.”



**Rev. Dr. Richard Gilbert**  
Rochester, New York

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

“[Medical aid in dying] is the last right of a human being ... the greatest reverence for life is to end human suffering.”



**Desmond Tutu**  
Milnerton, Cape Town, South Africa

Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town and Nobel Peace laureate, Tutu published a *Washington Post* op-ed in support of medical aid-in-dying legislation in 2016.

“As a Christian, I believe in the sanctity of life and that death is a part of life ... For those suffering unbearably and coming to the end of their lives, merely knowing that an assisted death is open to them can provide immeasurable comfort.”

## Physician Support for Medical Aid in Dying



**TOTAL SUPPORT: 67%** **TOTAL OPPOSITION: 19%**

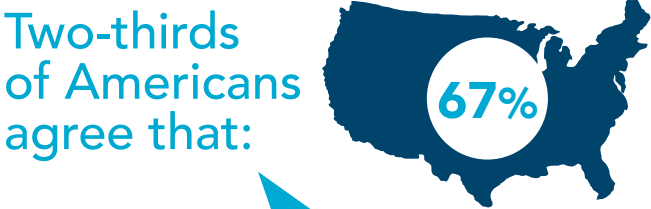
When New York physicians learned about how medical aid in dying would be implemented in the bill before the state Legislature, their level of **support jumped 18 points**, from a 30-point margin (**56%–26%**) in support to a 48-point margin (**67%–19%**) in support.

BY A MARGIN OF  
**63%–20%**  
SUPPORT OPPOSE

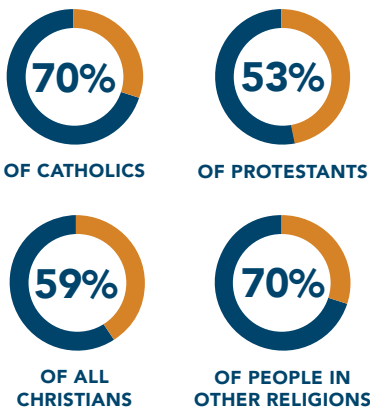
New York State physicians said they would **like to have the option of medical aid in dying** if they become terminally ill.

Source: WebMD/Medscape 2019

## People of All Faiths Support Medical Aid in Dying



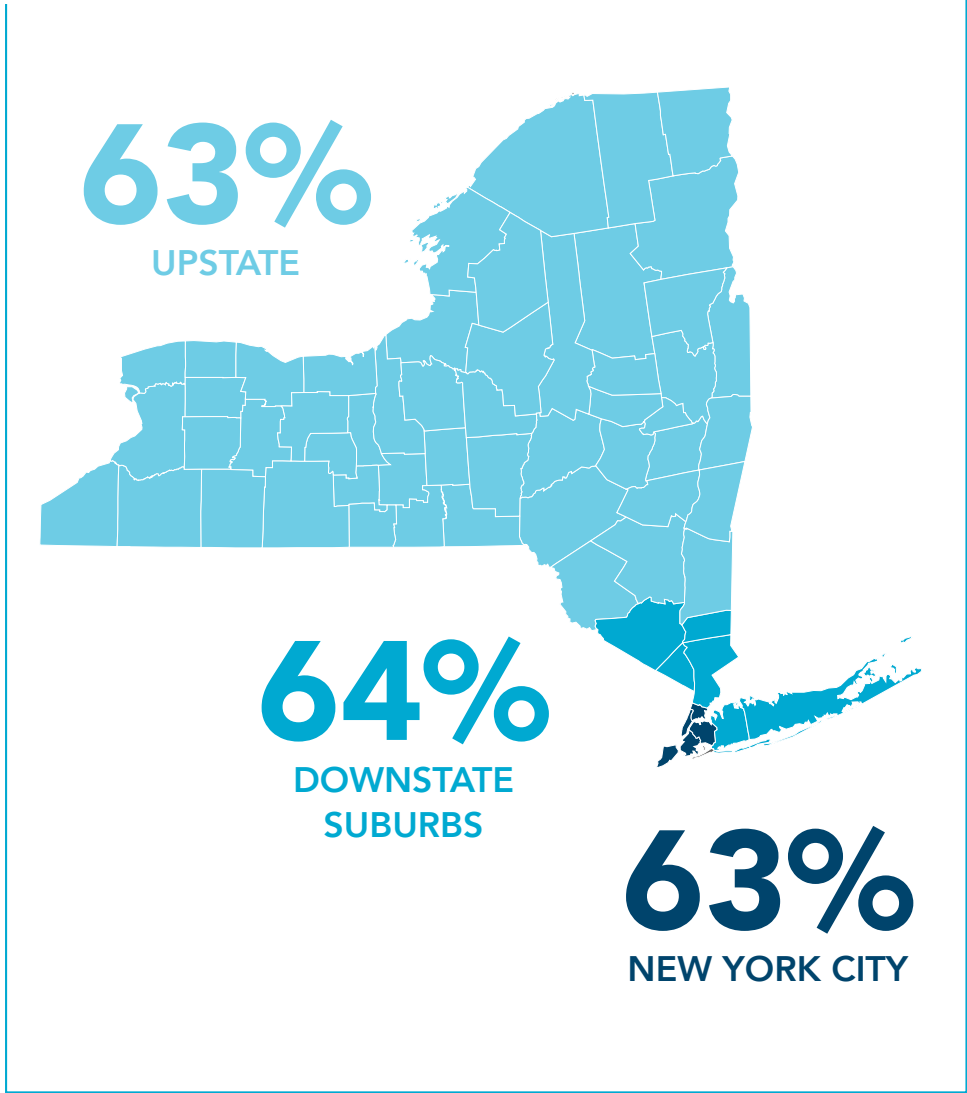
“When a person is facing a painful terminal disease, it is morally acceptable to ask for a physician’s aid in taking his or her own life.”



Source: 2016 National LifeWay survey

# New York State Supports Medical Aid in Dying

## Support for Medical Aid in Dying Is Consistent Across New York



Source: Quinnipiac University New York Voters Poll, May 2018

## By More Than a 2–1 Margin New York State Voters Support ...



“

I say pass the bill ... the older we get and the better medicine gets, the more we’ve seen people suffer for too, too long ... it’s a situation we have to address, definitely.”

– Gov. Andrew Cuomo, WAMC/NPR, April 9, 2019





# New York Medical Aid in Dying Act A2694 (Paulin)/S3947 (Savino)

## The legislation allows:

A terminally ill, mentally capable adult with a prognosis of six months or less to live the option to obtain prescription medication they can decide to take to die peacefully in their sleep if their suffering becomes unbearable.

The bill is modeled after the Oregon Death With Dignity Act, which has been in effect for more than 20 years without a single instance of abuse or coercion.

## *It includes over a dozen safeguards:*

- » The terminally ill person must be able to take the medication themselves.
- » Only those with an incurable and irreversible terminal illness and six-month prognosis, confirmed by two doctors, are eligible for medical aid in dying. Individuals are not eligible simply because of age or disability.
- » The attending physician must inform the requesting person about all of their end-of-life care options, including hospice and pain and symptom management.
- » If either doctor has concerns about the person's mental capacity to make such a decision, they must refer the person to a mental health professional for an assessment. Medication can't be prescribed unless the person's mental capacity is determined to be sound.
- » The requesting person must make two separate requests for the medication: one oral request and one written request. Two people must witness the terminally ill person's written request.
- » Prescribing doctors must comply with medical-record documentation requirements and make records available to the state department of health.
- » Providers receive civil and criminal immunity for participating in the law, as long as they comply with all aspects of the law.
- » Anyone attempting to coerce a patient is subject to criminal prosecution.
- » A terminally ill person can withdraw their request for medication, not take the medication once they have it or otherwise change their mind at any point.
- » Life insurance payments can't be denied to a family because a loved one uses the law.
- » No physician, health provider or pharmacist is required to participate.
- » Unused medication must be disposed of in a safe and secure manner, according to the guidelines specified by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and New York State Department of Health.
- » The state department of health is required to issue a publicly available annual report. Identifying information about individuals and doctors who participate in the law is kept confidential.



# These New Yorkers Have No Time to Waste

## Their Message to Lawmakers: Pass the Medical Aid in Dying Act **NOW**



**Betty Rollin**  
New York City

An Emmy award-winning journalist, her bestselling 1985 memoir *Last Wish* deals with her mother, Ida's (center in photo) plea for help to die peacefully. Today her husband, Ed (right in photo) faces a terminal cancer diagnosis and the same grim options her mother did 36 years ago.

"My husband has stage IV colon cancer. Our lives have been full of happiness and good fortune, and we are grateful. We may continue to be lucky and die in our sleep. But we're not counting on that, and should either of us get to a point where we want to die with a physician's help, we know we can't have that help. Nor can anyone else who happens to live in New York state. We hope that will change."



**Susan Rahn**  
Rochester

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

"Eventually, my treatment options will run out. What I don't want is to suffer and be in uncontrollable pain while my body shuts down for what could be weeks, and I don't want my son to have to watch me go through that."



**Deborah Stern**  
Williamsville

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

"In the past, I have had a great deal of fear about death and dying. But as my disease has progressed, I have come to have less fear about dying itself. The fear now is more about suffering at the end and about my family and loved ones having to witness that. I watched my father die a prolonged death from cancer, and it was extremely traumatizing."



**Ida Schmertz**  
New York City

A supporter living with chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL), a life-limiting illness.

"I plan to continue to live actively as long as I possibly can, seek additional treatment options when needed, and definitely support palliative care, hospice care and all other available options for end-of-life care when the time comes. But when my CLL is no longer treatable, the authorization of medical aid in dying would allow me the option to die as we all would wish — at home, surrounded by family and loved ones."



# These New Yorkers Died Asking New York's Legislature to Pass the Medical Aid in Dying Act



**Barbara Hammer** (1939-2019)  
New York City

Pioneering LGBTQ filmmaker Barbara was a terminally ill advocate in New York who worked to authorize medical aid in dying.

"Because of my zest for life and my continued creativity, I've been able to go up and down ... up and down ... through my living with cancer. But I will be dying with cancer. Please let me determine when that is."



**Bernadette Hoppe** (1965-2019)  
Buffalo

An attorney, Bernadette urged legislators to authorize medical aid in dying while facing terminal cancer.

"We plan for births, even though it's going to happen when it's going to happen, so why can't we do that for this last piece of our lives?"



**Jay Kallio** (1955-2016)  
New York City

A 9/11 first responder and hospice volunteer, Jay died in unrelenting pain from metastatic lung cancer.

"I would like to have the legal right to end my life in a way that's merciful for me, puts an early end to that suffering."



**Youssef Cohen** (1947-2016)  
New York City

New York University professor Youssef was forced to choose between dying a painful death or leaving the city he loved.

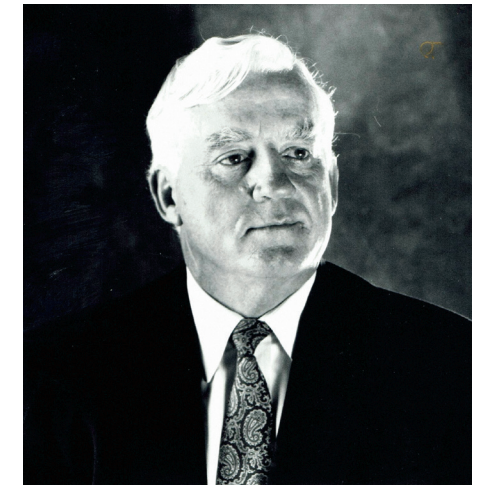
"I would prefer to give everything up ... and have a dignified death than to stay here with everything I love and all the people I love and die very slowly; a painful death in front of everybody ... I don't want my wife to go through that. I don't want my son to see that."



**Sara Myers** (1954-2016)  
New York City

ALS patient Sara, who lived in New York City and Kent, Connecticut, diligently advocated for the passage of medical aid-in-dying legislation.

"... there is no medicine to stop or even slow the progression of this disease ... I still face a nasty death in which my body is physically trapping me until I choke to death or can no longer breathe ... just to know that I had the option to call it quits, in a gentle and dignified manner, surrounded by family and friends, would give me enormous peace of mind."



**Jim Wiggins** (1935-2017)  
Syracuse, New York

A philosopher, activist and longtime professor of religion at Syracuse University, Jim advocated for medical aid in dying while facing several cancer diagnoses.

"Not only have I taught religion, I also continue to participate in a Christian faith community. I do not believe that suffering is a value, nor do I believe that God intends for anyone to suffer. My wife and I want the option of medical aid in dying for the comfort and peace of mind that it will bring. Maybe we'll use it, maybe we won't — it will depend on our perspectives at that moment in our lives."



# Honoring the Courage of National Medical Aid-in-Dying Storytellers



**Brittany Maynard**  
(1984-2014)

Diagnosed with terminal brain cancer at the age of 29, Brittany wanted the option to request a prescription from a physician for medication that she could self-ingest if her suffering became unbearable. Brittany and her husband, Dan Diaz, decided to uproot their lives and move from California to Oregon, one of only five states where medical aid in dying was authorized in 2014. Before her death, Brittany shared her story with the world and propelled the end-of-life options movement forward. She was instrumental in the passage of the End of Life Option Act in California less than one year later.

“Brittany was able to focus on truly living life because she didn’t have to be terrified of how her dying process might play out. She died peacefully thanks to the option of medical aid in dying.”

– Dan Diaz, Brittany Maynard’s husband, continues his advocacy and activism for the end-of-life options movement as he promised his wife he would.



**Miguel Carrasquillo** (1980-2016)

Miguel, a chef from Puerto Rico living in Chicago, was diagnosed with an aggressive form of brain cancer. Miguel lived his last days suffering. He died at age 35 in 2016, advocating for the option of medical aid in dying. Miguel’s story received national attention in both English and Spanish language media, including an op-ed written by Univision Anchor Jorge Ramos about meeting Miguel.

“Miguelito was not a sinner for wanting to die peacefully, as some religious opponents of medical aid in dying would dare to suggest. He simply wanted to peacefully end to his suffering, not out of despair or depression, but to maintain some comfort in his final days so that he could pass gently.”

– Miguel’s mom, Nilsa Centeno, spoke about her son at a New York Día de los Muertos celebration in 2018.



**Hanna Olivas**

A 45-year-old mother of four children, Hanna has been living with a rare form of incurable blood cancer, multiple myeloma, since August 2017. Recently, doctors told Hanna she has only months to one year to live. Hanna hopes for the option of medical aid in dying in her home state of Nevada.

“When our Lord calls me, I do not want to be connected to machines, catheters and tubes that will cause more pain and vomiting that only debilitate my relatively young 45-year-old body. I want to die peacefully, surrounded by my husband and our two sons, two daughters and our precious grandchildren, Dominic and Damien, holding my hand in prayer.”





# The Desire for Patient Autonomy at the End of Life Is Universal



## Dolores Huerta

Civil rights icon Dolores Huerta joined a bilingual education campaign promoting legislation to expand end-of-life care options in New Mexico, Nevada, New Jersey and New York. Today 69% of Latinos nationwide support medical aid in dying. Huerta holds the Presidential Medal of Freedom award, the nation's highest civilian honor.

“I watched my mother suffer and die in agony from breast cancer, so I know firsthand about the desperate need for expanded choice at the end of life. That is why I spent long hours in California working to pass the state’s End of Life Option Act, authorizing medical aid in dying, that took effect in 2016.”



## Elijah Cummings (1951-2019)

Maryland Congressman Elijah Cummings endorsed Maryland’s medical aid-in-dying legislation before his death. This excerpt of a letter by Rep. Cummings was read by Maryland Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass at a 2019 hearing of the state’s Joint Committee on Health and Government Operations.

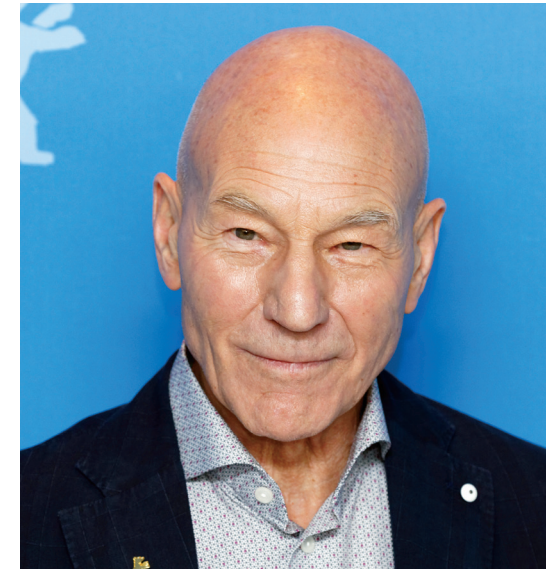
“... I have experienced the loss of far too many people ... some of whom suffered for months knowing they were about to die ... There are those among us whose conscience can never accept that any person should have the right to choose the manner and timing of their passing [but] at the end of life, an individual’s right to self-determination about one of the most personal decisions that anyone could make supersedes the moral sensibilities of others.”



## Janet Duprey

Retired Republican NYS Assemblymember Janet Duprey spoke about her mother, who ended her life by choosing to surrender her feeding tube. Her death by voluntarily stopping eating and drinking, known as VSED, took 11 days.

“My dad, Peter Lacy, died in 1994 of mesothelioma ... At the end he had excruciating pain and even the great care from hospice and the prescribed morphine didn’t touch the pain. Five years later my Mom died following a series of strokes ... Without any food or even a sip of water, my mother lived for 11 long days. I hope none of you ever have to go through it ... I want the ability to choose my own destiny.”



## Patrick Stewart

Celebrated star of film, television and the stage for more than 50 years, Sir Patrick Stewart now lends his powerful voice to campaigning for the right to die with dignity in the United Kingdom.

“The myriad things that medicine can do to keep somebody alive don’t automatically follow as the best option. There’s got to be an alternative when someone is suffering and ready to go. I have a strong feeling that should the time come for me, having had no role in my birth I would like there to be a choice I might make about how I die.”



## Tina Turner

Legendary singer Tina Turner wrote about her own end-of-life planning following several serious medical issues — including a kidney transplant — in her 2018 memoir *My Love Story*.

“I was surviving, but not living ... Once you live this long, there’s not much more ahead. If my kidneys were going, and it was time for me to die, I could accept that ... I didn’t mind the thought of dying ... but I was concerned about how I would go.”