

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT
New York Medical Aid in Dying Act A.995A (Paulin)/S.2445A (Hoylman-Sigal)

To: New York State Assembly and Senate
Re: A.995A (Paulin)/S.2445A (Hoylman-Sigal)

The Medical Aid in Dying Act (A.995A/S.2445A) would allow a terminally ill, mentally capable adult to request life-ending medication from a doctor that the person can self-administer at a time of his or her choosing, or never, should suffering become unbearable.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. We have 43 Leagues state-wide and over 3,500 members. The League strongly supports the principle that individuals should be responsible for their personal health and should participate with their family and their physician in decisions regarding their health. We feel this bill gives individuals that right and access to safe, comprehensive end of life options. This legislation also includes safeguards against abuse of the dying and protections for medical personnel who act in good faith compliance with the law.

In 2017-18 our Leagues studied the issue of Medical Aid in Dying, considering the experience in other states, the pros and cons, the effect on the dying and their families and on medical personnel. We reached a consensus in favor of Medical Aid in Dying. We support the right of terminally ill individuals to have a full range of choices for dying in ways that provide them comfort. Medical aid in dying provides peace of mind to terminally ill patients. It allows a doctor to write a prescription for medication in response to a request from a terminally ill, mentally capable adult. The person can take the medication so long as they can self-administer it, in order to achieve a peaceful death. The availability of this option, even for those who choose not to take the medication in the end, will improve the quality of end-of-life care for terminally ill New Yorkers.

Medical aid in dying is needed because:

- Too many New Yorkers suffer needlessly at the end of life
- Too many endure unrelenting pain at the end of life
- Too many turn to violent means at the end of life when medical aid could help them die peacefully
- Too many feel they have little control over their own life (and death) when a terminal illness has taken over

Expanding choice and care at the end of life provides New Yorkers autonomy. Studies have shown that patients who receive counseling about end-of-life choices score higher on quality of life and mood measures than patients who do not.

For the aforementioned reasons, the League of Women Voters of New York State supports New York's Medical Aid in Dying Act and urges the legislature to act swiftly to pass it.