



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: (207) 287-4469

Karleton S. Ward

P. O. Box 612

Holden, ME 04429

Residence: (207) 843-7546

Karl.Ward@legislature.maine.gov

L.D. 180

"An Act to Allow Terminally Ill Patients to Use Experimental Treatments"

Representative Karl Ward

Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Karl Ward and I am a member of the 127th Maine Legislature representing the people of Maine House District 13, which includes the towns of Otis, Dedham, Orland, Penobscot, Verona Island, Prospect and Stockton Springs.

I appear before you today as a mandatory co-sponsor of LD180, "An Act to Allow Terminally Ill Patients to Use Experimental Treatments", otherwise known as the "Right to Try", being presented by my friend and respected colleague, Representative Thomas Longstaff.

That Tom has a D after his name and I have an R after mine is irrelevant when considering this issue. This is a matter that affects all our collective constituents. Mainers send us here to work together to forge a bipartisan approach to solving the State's problems. In this case, it was easy. This bill doesn't recognize party or ideology.

Before I begin my testimony, however, I'm going to ask you to remember. I'd like you to take a moment, let what's going on right now take a back seat, and I want you to remember the past. Think back to someone you've lost to illness... someone who meant a lot to you. Someone you loved.

Do you remember when it became apparent that they were going to die? They had fought hard and it had taken a terrible physical toll. They wanted to keep living. They wanted to keep trying.

Now imagine in that same awful scene, someone you love very, very much right now - your mother or father, your wife, your husband. Imagine it is your child. The physician looks at you and says, "I'm sorry, there's nothing more I can do".

That scene is played out hundreds of times in this country every single day. And someday, in the not-so-distant future, it is likely to happen to you. And if that happens in your future, I think every one of us would do almost anything to give us even the slimmest chance. A glimmer of hope.

As of today, In 12 states, that hope had been provided, in the form of state legislation similar to the bill being brought before you today. In 2014, Right to Try was passed in the state legislatures of Colorado, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri and last fall, voters in Arizona adopted a resolution to place the issue on the November ballot where it was approved by a nearly 80 percent of Arizonans and became law.

And in just the first 3 months of this year, Right to Try bills have been filed in 28 additional states and the District of Columbia, including Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire and has been enacted into law in Arkansas, Indiana, Mississippi, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, and Wyoming.

As of This afternoon, a pending bill awaits the Governor's signature in Oklahoma (where it just passed in the house 96-0). All across this country, in red states and blue states, Americans are agreeing. Any hope is better than the alternative of no hope, which is inevitable when no treatments are made available for terminal patients.

We agree that each of us should be free to exercise a basic freedom - to attempt to preserve our own life. The burdens imposed on a terminal patient who fights to save his or her own life are a violation of personal liberty.

We should have the option of accessing investigational drugs which have passed basic safety tests, provided there is a doctor's recommendation, informed consent and the willingness of the manufacturer of the medication to make such drugs available.

We all should have the Right to Try.

But unlike the 12 states who have already passed this law, in Maine, our people do not possess that legal right.

I stand before you here today and ask you, regardless of party or ideology to consider this bipartisan legislation and vote this bill out of this committee a unanimous Ought to Pass.

Do it for those we remember for whom this legislation comes too late. And do it for the Mainers and our own loved ones that will someday see their hopes dim.

Give them Hope. Give them the Right to Try.

Thank you for your time and I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.