

60 REASONS TO SUPPORT NEW YORK'S MEDICAL AID IN DYING ACT

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.

I'm a national and international consultant on human rights issues, including human trafficking, trauma and torture.

Despite this sobering professional experience, there was nothing more personally traumatic for me than helplessly watching the love of my life (Barbara Hammer) die in prolonged distress because there was nothing I could do to relieve her suffering, even though she had the best hospice care available.

During the last year of her life, Barbara utilized her status as an acclaimed Manhattan artist and filmmaker and her remaining energy to publicly urge New York lawmakers to pass a bill to allow terminally ill adults to get prescription medication that they could take to peacefully end their suffering and die in their sleep.

Sadly, our lawmakers failed to pass the legislation, even after Gov. Cuomo urged them a few weeks after Barbara died to "pass the bill" because "the older we get and the better medicine gets, the more we've seen people suffer for too, too long."

In fact, legislative support for medical aid in dying is growing every year in New York and nationwide. The minority of people who oppose medical aid in dying don't have to participate in it, so they shouldn't have the power to deny this option to die peacefully to the majority who want it.

I'm in my mid-70s and in relatively good health, but after watching Barbara die with needless suffering, the last thing I want to do when I die — as we all will do one day — is repeat her end-of-life experience. I want options. Poll after poll on this issue shows most New Yorkers feel the same way, so I encourage them to join me in telling our lawmakers, it's time to pass the New York Medical Aid in Dying Act.

To join our mission, email Amanda Cavanaugh at acavanaugh@compassionandchoices.org.

