

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

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.***

My father had a good life, but he did NOT have a good death.

When my dad's colon cancer suddenly took a turn for the worse and his doctor said there was nothing more to be done, my father asked his four kids to help research the residency requirements for moving to the aid-in-dying state of Vermont. He wanted to be in as much control of his death as he had been of his life.

When we reported back to my father that the residency rules were three months and that he was now so sick that it was too late to move him, I'll never forget the anger and despair that crossed his face. Anger because after four years with cancer doing everything he could to extend his life, he was now having no say in how or when he was going to die. And despair because he feared the suffering and loss of control that was headed his way.

He was right to fear it. My siblings and I cared for him at home hospice with far too little support — only five short nurse visits over 11 days. We didn't know what we were doing, and after it was all over, we were using the words "traumatic" and "harrowing."

My pledge to my father and myself is that we can do better at the end of life. Suffering is neither ennobling nor redeeming, as some would have it. It is awful, and shouldn't be mandatory, ruining the end of a good life and leaving bad memories for loved ones.

People with terminal illnesses, like my independent and funny father, should have a choice about how they leave this world. I know I would want that for myself one day, which is why I support the New York Medical Aid in Dying Act.

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

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