

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

## Laurene Gilbert

Her husband, Steve, wasn't able to die in  
accordance with his values

Ithaca, New York



### Reason #23

***So that no one has to deal with the horror of her husband's failed attempt to end his own life.***

**I**n 2006 my husband of twenty years, Steve Gilbert, passed away at the age of 62 after being diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer.

Over the course of the four years before Steve's death, and as he underwent the rigors of radiation, chemotherapy, and multiple surgeries, our marriage grew ever stronger and we became even more in love.

Facing something like that either brings people closer together or drives them apart. We could not have been closer or more in love. Those four years meant everything.

About six months before he died he entered hospice. He made it perfectly clear to me, his son, friends, family, doctors, and hospice that he wanted to have control over his own end. He wanted very much to maintain what dignity he had left. He did not want to wither away to anything on a bed while his loved ones stood by watching. He wanted to be able to say goodbye and die a peaceful death.

In December of 2005, his condition began to deteriorate dramatically. As the disease progressed he became emaciated, got weaker and weaker, turned a shade of orange that has no place in nature, and slept endlessly.

Then, one night right after the holidays, I came home from work and saw there were no lights on in the house. My worst fears were realized.

He had attempted to take control and end his life. He left me a tender note and instructed me to under no circumstances "save" him. But his attempt failed and he was in a coma for six days before he passed.

Those six days were horrific for me and our family. Hospice nurses were in daily as we administered to his physical needs. He laid on a gurney in his beloved sunroom. We were unable to know if he was in pain as he was mostly unresponsive. I honored his request to not save him, but this is not the way he wanted to die.

**Subsequently, I vowed to fight for aid in dying. I believe with all my heart that no one should have to go through what Steve went through.**

To join our mission, email Amanda Cavanaugh  
at [acavanaugh@compassionandchoices.org](mailto:acavanaugh@compassionandchoices.org).

 compassion  
& choices