

# HOW TO TALK TO LEGISLATORS ABOUT DEATH WITH DIGNITY

To pass Death with Dignity laws, we must communicate the importance of the law in as many ways as we can – writing letters and emails, making phone calls, publicly testifying, and speaking with legislators directly. Speaking with legislators directly can be challenging. Many will give vague or partial answers. With the right strategy, questioning legislators about Death with Dignity will help lead to meaningful commitments and straightforward answers.

## PREPARATION:

Look up the status of Death with Dignity in your state, and look up your elected leader's history of support (or opposition) on any pending bills.

## LOGISTICS:

Find opportunities to speak with legislators by following them on social media or signing up for their newsletters.

At public events, position yourself at the front of the audience. Raise your hand immediately at the beginning of questioning sessions to increase the chances of being called on.

Ask a specific question that you formulate ahead of time. Depending on the setting, you may only get one chance.

Record their response. Filming is best, but writing down details is also helpful.

Spread the word. Share their response with the media, other activists, and other legislators.

## ASKING QUESTIONS:

Avoid simple yes/no questions.

**Example:** Do not ask “Will you support a Death with Dignity law?” but instead ask “What will you do to pass a Death with Dignity law?” This pushes them to explain their position, either giving more visibility to Death with Dignity’s benefits, or exposing weaknesses in their opposition.

Make sure your approach matches the situation. For example, if you are in a space where you have time to ask a longer question, make it personal and start the question with your own experience.

**Example:** I watched my mother suffer as she slowly died from cancer, in excruciating pain daily, and losing control of her body. She begged me and her doctors to help put an end to her suffering, however our current state laws left her to die slowly and in agony. Why do you think Death with Dignity is important and what will you do to pass it in our state?

However, if you’re in a space where a long question is not appropriate, get directly to your point with a short question.

**Example:** What will you do to ensure Death with Dignity is available in our state?