

**GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT UPON SIGNING
ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 1504
(Second Reprint)**

Today I am signing the "Medical Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill Act", Assembly Bill No. 1504 (Second Reprint), which permits terminally ill, adult patients residing in New Jersey to obtain and self-administer medication to end their lives peacefully and humanely. I commend the bill's sponsors - particularly Assemblyman Burzichelli, for whom this bill has been an extremely passionate and personal mission since he first introduced it seven years ago - for their tireless efforts to craft legislation that respects the dignity and autonomy of capable individuals to make end-of-life decisions.

The legislation I am signing today is the product of a near-decade long debate among policy makers, religious organizations, experts in the medical community, advocates for persons with disabilities, and patients, among many others. Without question, reasonable and well-meaning individuals can, and very often do, hold different moral views on this topic. Through years of legislative hearings, countless witnesses, many of whom shared deeply personal and heart-wrenching testimony, offered compelling arguments both in favor of and against this legislation.

As a lifelong, practicing Catholic, I acknowledge that I have personally grappled with my position on this issue. My faith has informed and enhanced many of my most deeply held progressive values. Indeed, it has influenced my perspectives on issues involving social justice, social welfare, and even those topics traditionally regarded as strictly economic, such as the minimum wage. On this issue, I am torn between certain principles of my faith and my compassion for those who suffer unnecessary, and often intolerable, pain at the end of their lives.

It is undeniable that there are people with terminal illnesses whose lives are reduced to agony and pain. Some of these individuals may thoughtfully and rationally wish to bring an end to their own suffering but cannot do so because the law prevents it and compels them to suffer, unnecessarily and against their will. I have seen such debilitating suffering firsthand in my own family, and I deeply empathize with all individuals and their families who have struggled with end-of-life medical decisions. As things now stand, it is the law, rather than one's own moral and personal beliefs, that governs such decisions. That is not as it should be. After careful consideration, internal reflection, and prayer, I have concluded that, while my faith may lead me to a particular decision for myself, as a public official I cannot deny this alternative to those who may reach a different conclusion. I believe this choice is a

personal one and, therefore, signing this legislation is the decision that best respects the freedom and humanity of all New Jersey residents.

Date: April 12, 2019

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Matthew J. Platkin

Chief Counsel to the Governor