

November 25, 2020

To:

Representative Ginter - Chairman
Representative Swearingen – Vice Chairman
Representative Howse – Ranking Member
Members of the Ohio House Aging and Long-Term Care Committee

Re: Testimony for passage of HB 770 The Essential Caregivers Act

Dear Representatives & Committee Members:

My name is Yvonne Clutter from Gambier Ohio. Though I write you by invitation to provide proponent testimony of HB 770, The Essential Caregivers Act, there are multiple reasons for my testimony. My father currently resides in a long-term care facility. I have witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of Governor Dewine's Covid response on the elderly community confined to nursing homes. My father continues to suffer needlessly as do others. It is our fervent hope & prayer that my witness will motivate you the legislators to intervene on our behalf.

A brief history - my father's plight began with a hemorrhagic stroke Sept 2019 that left him without speech, pharyngeal paralysis (difficulty swallowing), as well as loss of function in right arm & leg. To aid in recovery, his family members were incorporated into his daily therapeutic regimens of speech, physical & occupational practices. We also filled in the gaps between sessions in order to 'reset' his brain to hopefully recover some function lost. In addition, our family chaperoned his daily meals to ensure safety from choking. It was always my hope and still is that dad could eventually come to my home. However each day that goes by becomes less of an option. Currently he is full-assist (2-person) and has become more dependent on professional care.

On March 12, 2020 nursing home visits were banned by Governor Dewine under the guise of "protecting the most vulnerable". But the fact is my family & I weren't 'visiting'. We were tending to my father's physical & emotional well being. We were overseeing the daily processes of his care – not that the nursing home was doing a bad job – but because staff couldn't possibly & understandably handle all that was required of his care along with the number of other patients that needed coverage.

Nov 30, 2020 will be Day 262 that my father has been incarcerated for no crime but to have resided in a nursing home. Since the lockdown, dad has been sentenced to using his old fashioned flip phone to communicate. The problem is he can't articulate words so I am left to guess what his needs and concerns are. Visits thru doors and windows don't help either. We can't police the condition of his room, his supplies, or provide the emotional presence of someone at his side.

The outdoor visits permitted this summer by the Governor were also a sham. It remained discriminatory for those patients who were bedridden or too incapacitated to be outdoors.

I declined to visit dad outside because he would have to wear a mask – a deficit that would make it totally impossible for him to communicate. He uses his good hand sometimes to shape his lips to form a word. He also watches my lips to communicate. His mask, my mask & the “social distancing” thing wasn’t worth the effort.

To date, my father’s physical condition and plan of care have been compromised due to lack of oversight. Not intentionally of course but because we his family have been barred access to his care. After repeated requests through these many months, I was finally given a list of all my father’s current diagnoses & medications last week. I was appalled to find that he is being treated for additional concerns I didn’t know about. Among these were major depressive disorder, vitamin deficiencies, as well as attention & concentration deficits. Also of note, his right arm and hand has atrophied from lack of exercise - something I would do on a daily basis prior to lockdown. Diabetes interventions have also been neglected due to lack of nutritional oversight. His meals are no longer chaperoned either. He was able to communicate to me last week that meals are difficult to chew thus the concern of choking hazard is present 3 times a day.

Oh & now this... The nursing home phoned me today to say that my father was exposed by a nurse who tested positive for Covid. Asymptomatic of course but nonetheless this nurse got by the daily temperature check when reporting for work. So much for safe keeping!! Dad was already confined to a room under “quarantine” for a minor hospital visit that was supposed to end Nov 29. Now he is “isolated within isolation” until Dec. 8 in a 10 x 10 room with his phone, a window & TV for human contact. Recently he said the word “lonely” in a broken voice

This one incident of many begs the question - why is it that it’s OK for nursing home staff to go home every day/night to their families, shop the big box stores, eat out and come back to work the next day? The constant ebb & flow of personnel makes our loved ones just as vulnerable. Yet families are forbidden access because we might “spread the virus”. There are many ways that family visits could have been supported but Emperor Dewine is too busy determining his next move to beat Ohioans into submission.

And now a word regarding costs... my father’s care to this facility is private pay. The meds and therapies that proceed without family management are costing him dearly. Cost of medicines and therapies not covered by supplemental Medicare insurance bury these precious persons with debt. Medicaid might provide some relief but not for my dad at this time. It would seem that whoever is paying the bills should have voice in their care processes yet denial is the name of the game.

Day 262 and beyond is another day wasted that families are denied the rights and priveleges of a loved ones’ care. Their sunset years are waning away without a thought for their plight. Governor Dewine’s nursing home policies are and continue to be criminal, negligent, pernicious, Insidious & dare I say malevolent. This imprisonment has created nothing less than a FEMA camp by proxy. His approach to the C-19 crisis continue to deprive precious elderly people of their families’ protection, deny oversight of their health status, overwork nursing home staff, intensify cognitive decline, and create enhanced depression & anxiety for themselves and their families.

And another thing, it has been acknowledged by my father's nursing home staff that residents have died due to non-human contact. Family members also report death due to malnourishment & neglect. Governor Dewine along with his minions at the Ohio Dept of Health are complicit in these declines and tragic deaths.

One last point - Families of our nursing home residents fear that should lockdowns be permitted to continue, we may witness other social experiments i.e. mandatory vaccines for the elderly. My concern does not arise because I have negative views about vaccines (I don't). But there are precisely zero human volunteers for whom there could possibly be more than a few months post-dose safety information. It is not known what the safety profile will be, six months or a year or longer after dosing. There is literally no data on this. Yet the Governor hints that vaccine mandates are coming.

In conclusion, we are all caretakers in a sense with a moral & ethical obligation to relieve the stress caused by the insane mandates of Governor Dewine which have gone too long unchecked. All of us are responsible & you the legislature in particular must guarantee their peace and safety. It shouldn't take legislation to perform what already is our right to do.

Passage of HB 770 will grant protection from overreach of Governor Dewine and unelected officials who assert mandates contrary to the health, safety and well-being of our elderly loved ones.

Passage of HB 770 will define the privileges caretakers need to promote health & safety and well-being of our loved ones.

Passage of HB 770 will grant me and my family the same access to my dad as the nursing home staff – up close & personal.

Passage of HB 770 will permit me and my family to assert our duties and moral obligations to my dad without hindrance.

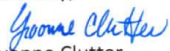
Passage of HB 770 will allow RIGHTFUL caretakers to advocate on our loved one's behalf when necessary.

Passage of HB 770 will provide basic human needs of love, companionship, touch and presence.

Passage of HB 770 will grant elderly residents protection of their constitutional rights as valid citizens of Ohio.

Many thanks from the bottom of my heart for allowing me the privilege to address what has become an intense burden for many. Also my personal Thanks to Representative Richardson and Representative Fraizer for advocating on behalf of my father and those in the same predicament as him.

Sincerely,


Yvonne Clutter
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Gambier, OH 43022