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135th General Assembly
Regular Session
2023-2024

Sub. H. B. No. 236

A BILL

To enact sections 3792.05 and 3792.06 of the
Revised Code to prohibit a congregate care
setting from denying a patient or resident
access to an advocate during public health
emergencies and to name this act the Never Alone
Act.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

Section 1. That sections 3792.05 and 3792.06 of the
Revised Code be enacted to read as follows:

Sec. 3792.05. (A) As used in this section and section
3792.06 of the Revised Code:

(1) "Advocate" means an individual who advocates on behalf
of a congregate care setting patient or resident. An advocate
may include but is not limited to any of the following:

(a) The patient's or resident's spouse, family member,
companion, or guardian;

(b) In the case of a minor patient or resident, the



<u>minor's residential parent and legal custodian or the minor's</u>	17
<u>guardian;</u>	18
<u>(c) An individual designated as an attorney in fact for</u>	19
<u>the patient or resident under a durable power of attorney for</u>	20
<u>health care as described in section 1337.12 of the Revised Code;</u>	21
<u>(d) An individual appointed by a court to act as the</u>	22
<u>patient's or resident's guardian.</u>	23
<u>(2) "Congregate care setting" includes all of the</u>	24
<u>following:</u>	25
<u>(a) A county home or district home operated under Chapter</u>	26
<u>5155. of the Revised Code;</u>	27
<u>(b) A health care facility, as defined in section 3702.30</u>	28
<u>of the Revised Code;</u>	29
<u>(c) A hospice care program or pediatric respite care</u>	30
<u>program, each as defined in section 3712.01 of the Revised Code,</u>	31
<u>but only when providing care and services other than in a home;</u>	32
<u>(d) A hospital, as defined in section 3722.01 of the</u>	33
<u>Revised Code;</u>	34
<u>(e) A hospital, as defined in section 5119.01 of the</u>	35
<u>Revised Code;</u>	36
<u>(f) A nursing home, residential care facility, or home for</u>	37
<u>the aging, each as defined in section 3721.01 of the Revised</u>	38
<u>Code;</u>	39
<u>(g) A residential facility, as defined in section 5123.19</u>	40
<u>of the Revised Code;</u>	41
<u>(h) A veterans' home operated under Chapter 5907. of the</u>	42
<u>Revised Code.</u>	43

(3) "Physician" means an individual authorized under Chapter 4731. of the Revised Code to practice medicine and surgery, osteopathic medicine and surgery, or podiatric medicine and surgery. 44
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(4) "Political subdivision" means a county, township, municipal corporation, school district, or other body corporate and politic responsible for governmental activities in a geographic area smaller than that of the state. "Political subdivision" also includes a board of health of a city or general health district. 48
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(5) "Practitioner" includes all of the following: 54

(a) A certified nurse-midwife, clinical nurse specialist, or certified nurse practitioner, each as defined in section 4723.01 of the Revised Code; 55
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(b) A physician; 58

(c) A physician assistant licensed under Chapter 4730. of the Revised Code; 59
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(d) A psychologist, as defined in section 4732.01 of the Revised Code. 61
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(6) "Public official" means any officer, employee, or duly authorized representative or agent of a political subdivision or state agency. 63
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(7) "State agency" means every organized body, office, agency, institution, or other entity established by the laws of the state for the exercise of any function of state government. "State agency" does not include a court. 66
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(B) (1) At the time of a patient's or resident's admission to a congregate care setting or at first opportunity after 70
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admission, the congregate care setting shall do both of the 72
following: 73

(a) Inform the patient or resident that the patient or 74
resident may designate an individual to serve as the patient's 75
or resident's advocate; 76

(b) Except as provided in division (B) (2) of this section, 77
provide the patient or resident the opportunity to make such a 78
designation. 79

(2) In the case of an individual described in division (A) 80
(1) (b), (c), or (d) of this section, the congregate care setting 81
shall consider the individual to be a patient's or resident's 82
advocate without the patient or resident having to make such a 83
designation. 84

(3) An individual described in division (A) (1) of this 85
section is ineligible to act as a patient's or resident's 86
advocate if any of the following is the case: 87

(a) There has been an adjudicated finding that the 88
individual abused the patient or resident. 89

(b) The congregate care setting has determined that the 90
individual poses a serious risk to the patient's or resident's 91
physical health. 92

(c) The individual is excluded from visiting or 93
communicating with the patient or resident as described in 94
division (F) (2) (i) of Rule 66.09 of the Rules of Superintendence 95
for the Courts of Ohio. 96

(4) At any time, a patient or resident may revoke an 97
individual's designation as an advocate by communicating the 98
revocation to a congregate care setting staff member. After 99

revocation, a patient or resident may designate another 100
individual to serve as the patient's or resident's advocate. 101

(5) Division (B)(1) of this section does not require a 102
congregate care setting to employ, or contract with, an 103
individual to serve as an advocate for the care setting's 104
patients or residents. 105

(C) After an advocate has been designated, the advocate 106
shall not do either of the following: 107

(1) Physically interfere with, delay, or obstruct the 108
provision of any health care to which any of the following has 109
consented: the patient or resident; in the case of a minor 110
patient or resident, the minor's residential parent and legal 111
custodian or the minor's guardian; the patient's or resident's 112
attorney in fact under a durable power of attorney for health 113
care; or the patient's or resident's court-appointed guardian; 114

(2) Engage in conduct prohibited under Title XXIX of the 115
Revised Code, including as described in sections 2903.13, 116
2903.22, and 2917.22 of the Revised Code, against a staff member 117
or licensed health care practitioner who is employed by, or 118
under contract with, the congregate care setting. 119

(D) After an advocate has been designated, all of the 120
following apply to the congregate care setting: 121

(1) The congregate care setting shall request from the 122
patient or resident consent to the disclosure of the patient's 123
or resident's medical information to the advocate, except that, 124
when applicable, the care setting instead shall request such 125
consent from one of the following individuals: the patient's or 126
resident's attorney in fact under a durable power of attorney; 127
the patient's or resident's court-appointed guardian; or, in the 128

case of a minor patient or resident, the minor's residential 129
parent and legal custodian or the minor's guardian. 130

Both the request and disclosure shall be made in 131
accordance with the care setting's policies and state and 132
federal law. If consent to the disclosure is refused, the care 133
setting shall not disclose the patient's or resident's medical 134
information to the advocate. 135

(2) (a) Except as provided in division (D) (2) (b) of this 136
section, the congregate care setting shall neither deny the 137
patient or resident access to the advocate nor prohibit the 138
patient's or resident's advocate from being physically present 139
with the patient or resident in the care setting during either 140
of the following: 141

(i) Any public health emergency; 142

(ii) The period in which an order or rule issued under 143
division (C) of section 3701.13 of the Revised Code or section 144
3701.14, 3709.20, or 3709.21 of the Revised Code remains in 145
effect. 146

At all other times, and except as provided in division (D) 147
(2) (b) of this section, the care setting shall make every 148
reasonable effort to allow the patient's or resident's advocate 149
to be physically present with the patient or resident in the 150
care setting. 151

(b) Division (D) (2) (a) of this section does not apply if 152
any of the following is the case: 153

(i) The patient or resident requests that the advocate not 154
be present. 155

(ii) The advocate has violated either or both of the 156

prohibitions described in division (C) of this section. 157

(iii) The patient or resident is participating in a group therapy session. 158
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(iv) For the purpose of identifying possible abuse or neglect of a patient or resident, the care setting separates, in a manner consistent with standard operating procedures, the advocate from the patient or resident. The separation shall be temporary and last no longer than is necessary to identify abuse or neglect. 160
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(c) For purposes of division (D) (2) (a) of this section, patient or resident access to an advocate includes access on-site at the care setting itself and off-site through a means of telecommunication provided to the patient or resident. Off-site access through a means of telecommunication shall be provided at no cost to the patient or resident. 166
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(3) If the advocate violates either or both of the prohibitions described in division (C) of this section, the advocate shall be ineligible to serve as the patient's or resident's advocate, the individual's designation as an advocate shall become void, and the congregate care setting shall no longer consider that individual to be the patient's or resident's advocate. As soon as practicable, the care setting shall provide the patient or resident with an opportunity to designate another individual to serve as the patient's or resident's advocate. 172
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(E) (1) With respect to a congregate care setting that is a hospital or health care facility, division (D) (2) (a) of this section does not change or countermand any hospital or facility policy relating to the isolation of a patient during an invasive 182
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procedure, in particular, a policy under which the health care practitioner performing or overseeing such a procedure may determine that a sterile environment is required during the procedure in order to protect patient safety. 186
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(2) When a patient or resident of a congregate care setting has a highly infectious disease requiring special isolation precautions, division (D) (2) (a) of this section does not prevent the care setting from establishing, in order to minimize the disease's spread, a reasonable protocol governing the use of personal protective equipment in the care setting. The protocol's requirements must not be more restrictive for advocates than for care setting staff. 190
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Under the protocol, an advocate is exempt from using personal protective equipment while in the care setting if the advocate presents to the care setting a practitioner's note documenting that such use conflicts with, or is not required because of, the advocate's own physical or mental health condition. 198
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(3) In the event an infectious disease outbreak is serious enough to require the staff of a congregate care setting that is a hospital or health care facility to quarantine, then a patient's advocate shall be allowed to quarantine with the patient at the hospital or facility. The length of quarantine and quarantine requirements must not be more restrictive for advocates than for hospital or facility staff. 204
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(F) (1) A congregate care setting shall be immune from administrative and civil liability if a patient's or resident's advocate contracts, as a result of serving as the advocate, an infectious disease other than a foodborne disease. 211
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(2) Division (F)(1) of this section does not grant a 215
congregate care setting that is a hospital or health care 216
facility immunity from a claim of negligence or medical 217
malpractice for any care provided to the advocate should the 218
advocate seek treatment at the hospital or facility for the 219
infectious disease described in division (F)(1) of this section. 220

(G) A political subdivision, public official, or state 221
agency shall not issue any order or rule that would require a 222
congregate care setting to violate this section. 223

(H) Either of the following individuals may petition a 224
court of common pleas for injunctive relief restraining a 225
violation or threatened violation of this section: 226

(1) A patient or resident; 227

(2) A patient's or resident's advocate, but only if the 228
advocate is one of the following: the patient's or resident's 229
immediate family member, spouse, or guardian; in the case of a 230
minor patient or resident, the minor's residential parent and 231
legal custodian or the minor's guardian; or the patient's or 232
resident's attorney in fact under a durable power of attorney 233
for health care. 234

If the individual prevails, the court shall award the 235
individual court costs and reasonable attorney's fees associated 236
with petitioning the court for injunctive relief. 237

(I) Nothing in this section shall be construed to change, 238
interfere with, or restrict any of the rights and duties 239
described in sections 1337.11 to 1337.17 of the Revised Code. 240

Sec. 3792.06. (A) (1) The department of health shall create 241
a "Never Alone" information sheet that describes all of the 242
duties, prohibitions, requirements, and rights established under 243

<u>section 3792.05 of the Revised Code, including the following:</u>	244
<u>(a) That a congregate care setting is prohibited from</u>	245
<u>denying a patient or resident access to an advocate except as</u>	246
<u>provided in division (D)(2) or (E) of section 3792.05 of the</u>	247
<u>Revised Code;</u>	248
<u>(b) That a congregate care setting is prohibited from</u>	249
<u>prohibiting a patient's or resident's advocate from being</u>	250
<u>physically present with the patient or resident in the care</u>	251
<u>setting except as provided in division (D)(2) or (E) of section</u>	252
<u>3792.05 of the Revised Code;</u>	253
<u>(c) That the spouse, family member, companion, or guardian</u>	254
<u>of a patient or resident may serve as a patient or resident</u>	255
<u>advocate;</u>	256
<u>(d) That a congregate care setting must allow a patient's</u>	257
<u>advocate to quarantine with the patient at a congregate care</u>	258
<u>setting that is a hospital or health care facility under the</u>	259
<u>circumstances described in division (E)(3) of section 3792.05 of</u>	260
<u>the Revised Code;</u>	261
<u>(e) That an individual described in division (H) of</u>	262
<u>section 3792.05 of the Revised Code may petition a court of</u>	263
<u>common pleas for injunctive relief restraining any violation or</u>	264
<u>threatened violation of that section.</u>	265
<u>(2) The department shall periodically review and update</u>	266
<u>the information sheet and shall make it available on the</u>	267
<u>internet web site maintained by the department.</u>	268
<u>(B) At the time a patient or resident is admitted to, or</u>	269
<u>begins to receive services from, a congregate care setting, a</u>	270
<u>representative of the care setting shall do both of the</u>	271
<u>following:</u>	272

<u>(1) Verbally inform the patient or resident about the</u>	273
<u>duties, prohibitions, requirements, and rights established in</u>	274
<u>section 3792.05 of the Revised Code;</u>	275
<u>(2) Provide to the patient or resident a paper copy of the</u>	276
<u>"Never Alone" information sheet created under division (A) of</u>	277
<u>this section.</u>	278
<u>The copy provided under division (B) (2) of this section</u>	279
<u>shall be the most recent version available on the internet web</u>	280
<u>site maintained by the department.</u>	281
Section 2. This act shall be known as the Never Alone Act.	282