

Chairman Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide support testimony for HB 236, The Never Alone Act.

My husband Jeff was admitted to UC West Chester Hospital in July of 2021. For 21 days Jeff was left alone and declined steadily without the touch of a loving hand or an advocate there to help with decisions for his care. I was denied access to my husband “for my safety”, even though I had just recovered from the same illness he had. During these 21 days Jeff was left thirsty, hungry and ignored for hours on end. He sent pictures of his urinal filled to the top with nowhere else to go to the bathroom. His treatment was inhumane and all I could do was watch him suffer. When they were ignoring his call light button, even my calls to the nurses’ station did nothing. Throughout these 21 days Jeff was also mocked for his medical decisions and his faith. He was coerced into medical treatments and decisions because he was outnumbered and had no one there by his side to advocate for him. Unable to visit, my kids made a huge banner that said “we love you dad” so he could look out his hospital window and see it, but they were a day too late. He finally succumbed to the ventilator after the doctors relentlessly pushed for it.

Jeff would go on to fight another 56 days on the ventilator. And although I am one of the “lucky” ones who got to be with him when he died, the damage had already been done in those first 21 days. When he needed me...when he needed someone there to help fight for him, to love and care for him, to help with medical decisions and to get him simple things he needed....there was no one there. I believe so many patients could have survived if only they had someone by their side looking out for them and making sure they got the care and treatment they deserved. Personal contact is extremely important for the human spirit and in aiding in healing and recovery. The simple touch of a loved one can give patients the strength and comfort they need to keep fighting and to let them know they are not alone. I’m devastated that my husband didn’t have that.

I now must live with the guilt of not having been there for my husband in his greatest time of need. Committee Members, hopefully by passing this bill you and all Ohioans would never need to fear that you too may be kept from your loved ones in their darkest hour or yet be isolated yourself, trapped with no one by your side. I urge you to PLEASE vote yes on HB 236. Thank you for your time.

