

**Audra Whitman
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Hello,

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 name is Audra Whitman, and I live just outside of Dayton, Ohio. I am a constituent of Representative Tom Young on this committee. I am here today to tell the story of Judith Ann Owens- my Mother, my best friend, and my father's soul mate. She passed away early Christmas morning 2020 alone and under unexplained circumstances.

She was alone, scared, and in a hospital room surrounded by strangers when she passed. My family and I were not allowed to be with her due to severe covid restrictions. Her health went into extreme decline just after these restrictions were put into place. She was in and out of the Kettering Medical Centers in Dayton and Miamisburg many times during Covid for lung, heart, and stroke issues all unrelated to the virus.

My Mom was a very medically complicated patient, yet virtual visits were all that were being offered by each of her specialist doctors. The notion that virtual visits for her complex conditions seemed absolutely unscientific and not likely to benefit her, so the only way we could get her "hands-on" medical care was to take her to the hospital. Most of the time when she was in the hospital she was not allowed any visitors and little to no communication with us. When we were able to talk to her it was only briefly. Her condition caused confusion and she didn't understand why she was in there to begin with. She desperately

needed me, my Dad, or my brother with her to help explain what was going on. We fought hard each time to see her, but were denied over and over again. We honestly believe she would still be with us if it wasn't for the Covid restrictions that were implemented.

Our hearts are broken. We were left with very little answers as to how she passed away. I had to actually ask a nurse before we went in to see her how she passed and the answer we got was “she got up out of bed and became combative”. They never explained anything else. We were shocked that no one actually gave us a cause of death. I logged into her MyChart myself, within hours of her passing, to find that the records were deleted.

The toll it has taken on my family is literally gut-wrenching. My parents had just celebrated their 48th wedding anniversary. They were soul mates. And the fact that we couldn't even get her on the phone much less be able to see her is completely unacceptable. That should have never happened. Every person needs an advocate to be with them no matter what their circumstances are.

Our lives were flipped upside down when we got that phone call on Christmas morning.

We will have to live with this for the rest of our lives. And the pain, sadness, and emotional toll it has taken on us will never go away. Our hearts are forever broken. I know what PTSD patients feel like because after going through this I have been diagnosed with PTSD. I also have panic attacks. Imagine being a 40-year-old woman who is afraid to take her child on vacation for fear, that her dad will be hospitalized, and that I will lose him the same way I lost my mother and I won't be able to get to him and advocate for him either.

Lastly, my Mom loved the good Lord above. The one and only silver lining in all of this is knowing she was with Jesus the day

she left us. I want to reiterate that Ohioans need the ability to provide advocacy to a loved one during a health crisis, no matter the situation. I ask the committee members to please vote Yes On HB 236. Thank you!

Audra Whitman



