

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.”

It was good to see your committee’s work on the Never Alone Act. Being a patient in a hospital or nursing home is a scary thing—especially for the elderly. Not being able to have someone with you makes it even worse.

In the summer of 2020, my mother fell in her home and was taken to Riverside Hospital and was in the intensive care unit for about a week. It was during the COVID period. At that time, the hospital allowed one person to visit the patient, which was good, but that one person had to be the same person the whole time the patient was in the hospital. That one person was my older sister. We were able to schedule a skype call using a social worker’s phone so my Mom could see and hear my other 2 sisters and I and we could talk to her. Her face lit up during the phone call.

After another couple weeks or so in the hospital, she was being released. My older sister (her medical power of attorney) decided to have her go to Country View Nursing home for physical therapy. She couldn’t walk. At the nursing home, no one was allowed in. We had to visit her from outside her room in the facility. When my older sister and her husband visited and when I visited with my daughter, one of the employees of the facility moved her near the window and put the phone on her tray so she could hear us talk to her. She wasn’t able to talk very well so we couldn’t understand what she was saying. When my 2 younger sisters visited, another employee said it was not their position to put a phone in the room and didn’t even move her close to the window so Mom could hear them talk to her.

She did get some therapy in the nursing home, but she wasn’t allowed out of her room and no one in the facility went in to get her up and walking. After a short while, she ended up getting sepsis and was transported back to Riverside. By that time, she was comatose and the hospice facilitator made arrangements for her to be transported to the Kobacker House. She did talk the hospital staff into letting my sisters and I visit my mother individually before she was transported—she didn’t know if my mother would be alive by the time she got to the Kobacker

House. At the Kobacker House, we were all allowed to come and go freely to visit my Mom until she passed away a short time later.

The problem with the hospital rule was that if that one person chosen to be with the patient was sick and unable to visit the patient, then the patient was left with no one to visit. The Never Alone Act would remedy this problem.

I ask the committee members to please vote yes on HB 236.