

To: Chairman Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross and Ranking Member Somani  
Members of the House Health Provider Services Committee, and,  
Representatives Melanie Miller and Representative Beth Lear

Re: House Bill 236      “The Never Alone Act”

Thank you for allowing me to testify regarding House Bill 236, “The Never Alone Act”.

I am the father of a now 36 year old Intellectually Developmentally Disabled (IDD) daughter. For the past 29 years, she’s been involved with state sponsored Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs). During that time, she has amassed 18 Major Unusual Incidents (MUIs), five of which she was fortunate to survive at the time they occurred.

The covid panic revealed some very serious concerns. In our case, despite decades of daily neglect and documented abuse, we were told we could not see our daughter. At the time, she was 33 and 34 years old and is a MULTIPLY HANDICAPPED IDD individual who was a resident of a state sponsored ICF.

We, and other parents/guardians, were told we could not see our family members!

For an entire year, parents and guardians were kept away from family who CANNOT DEFEND nor SPEAK for themselves. “Esther’s Law” had not been passed yet and, currently, still does not cover ICFs and Group Homes.

We’re talking about people who are incapable of picking up the phone and calling loved ones. People who, when their families do visit, are unable to tell them about events in their lives. Compound that with them living in environments that are known to be detrimental to their health and well-being, and it’s a nerve wracking existence on a good day.

It’s important for everyone to understand that family members received phone calls on a regular basis restating and reemphasizing how they could not come to visit their loved ones, all in the name of ‘covid protocols’.

It was absurd, it was cruel, it was dangerous, and it was entirely unnecessary.

This proposed law clearly addresses some of the abuses that occurred and seeks to make sure the mistakes we made are not repeated. This committee, and all of the individuals that comprise it, need to stand strong, defend fellow Ohioans, and make sure this NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN to the citizens of this state. Whether they belong to the IDD segment of society, or are our elderly who were forced to receive care ALONE, die ALONE and have non-existent funerals, what we did in the name of healthcare was unconscionable.

I urge this committee to pass this law out of committee and I pray the entire house passes this bill into law on a unanimous basis. We can **NEVER LEAVE PEOPLE ALONE AGAIN!**

Thank you again for the invitation to advocate for this bill.

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