

November 17, 2024

To: Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson  
Members of the Senate Health Committee

Thank you for hearing my support testimony for HB 236 the **NEVER ALONE ACT**. My name is Catherine D. Coker. I had been married to my high school sweetheart for 48 years. He died in a hospital in Germantown Tennessee in 2021, at the age of 68 years old. In all those years, he had not been to a doctor since 1973 when shrapnel from a machine hit him in the eye. I was married to a rough, tough patriot God-fearing American. In 2013 at my urging, I took him to a clinic which resulted in him being hospitalized and diagnosed with congestive heart failure. With medication, my husband Greg never slowed down through these next few years. He developed some urinary issues, that I am convinced was a result of some medications he was given, and his cardiac doctor had been monitoring him closely, as his heart rate was slowing down. Greg had no symptoms of Covid-19, as he had been tested several times in the week prior to his last hospitalization. When Greg became so weak that it took my daughter and I both to get him to the bathroom, I convinced him we must go to the hospital. That day was September 4<sup>th</sup> 2021. In retrospect, it was a very grave decision. When you take someone to the hospital, it is with the hope and expectation that your loved one will be better off than at home as they will get provided care needed. I never dreamed our nightmare was just beginning at the hospital. The ER doctor told me to call my family, that Gregs heart rate was at 20% and that he would not make it. A very kind Asian doctor knew, what I didn't at that time yet know. I just did not have the foresight or understanding needed to leave right then with my husband in tow and get him on hospice at home if needed. It was Labor Day and that added to the problems. After a few hours in this private ER room, a nurse came in to tell us that Greg had Covid-19 and I had to leave. Both of us were in shock. He had been tested repeatedly and until that day he was negative. He had no symptoms except for a cough, which is a side affect of heart failure. I was forced to leave the hospital, pending an officer coming to escort me out. The last thing I said to two nurses that gave this terrible news, was Greg was not to be put on And he was not to be placed on a ventilator as he has a living will. I stopped at the desk outside his room to make sure they understood it needed to be put in his records. I was told I could call and check on him. I called several times a day, at

all hours day & night. I kept notes on my calls, and names of the nurses. I was told they were giving him medication because he was anxious. They drugged him to keep him on a ventilator against his wishes. They also told me, they denied giving him anything to drink or eat. I was also told they strapped him down to the bed. Such inhumane treatment, I never would have believed. The night before he died, they phoned to tell me to come and bring my family. They had him on the ventilator, on his back. He hated to be on his back. He died early the next morning. This treatment was so cruel, that I would never have believed in my America, it was possible. He died alone, and without his family around him. Greg was such a loving, kind man. Always helping others and many times doing things anonymously. He did not deserve this, nor did our family.

I urge the committee to vote YES on HB236.

Thank you in advance,

Catherine D Coker  
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