

Julie Bowers, Delaware County, Testimony HB236

Dear Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, and Members of the Senate Health Committee,

Thank you for hearing my support testimony for HB 236 The "Never Alone Act"

I am in support of this bill and ask that you vote to pass this bill. I have 2 acquaintances that are widows. At the time of their husband's hospitalization-each outside of Ohio, these women were denied access to their husband in order to advocate on his behalf and support him in his time of crisis.

One of these gentlemen died on a trip to the ER. He died while his wife was sitting in a car outside the ER waiting for updates from the medical team. He endured a day of struggle and moved in and out of stability. Late in the day he was reported as finally stable and ready to move to a room. The next thing she knew, she was notified he passed! Sometimes the presence of a spouse can be the source needed to keep a person fighting for life. Sometimes a spouse or family members just need to be in the room, hold the hand of their loved one and say goodbye in order to give comfort and peace as they pass. This friend was denied all these options. That day in June 2020 her two teenage boys lost their father who died alone because his wife was denied access to him when he needed her most.

Another friend admitted her husband to a hospital at his request in the fall of 2021. He was immediately put on a ventilator and she and her children were dismissed from the premise. She was told she would be updated. Being on a ventilator prevented him from effectively communicating and feeding himself. He was scared and put in an area that considered his needs second to other patients. His wife learned later from phone records that he even dialed 911 from his phone during his hospitalization. That phone was mysteriously missing when she came in to gather his belongings after he passed. She has lots of questions and no answers. She was robbed of the help and comfort she could have been to her husband in his hours of distress. Her teen son and daughter never got to say goodbye to their father.

Both of these women not only grieve the loss of a husband and father to their children, but also the trauma that accompanies the isolation of their husbands from family at the time of their passing. "What could she have done to advocate for him? What did he need that staff wasn't in a hurry to get? What was he thinking about when he passed? Was he asking for family and nobody was there?" These are questions that haunt my widow friends and their children. This unique trauma that accompanies these situations adds to the journey of grief and in some ways is even harder to move on from. It feels that a great injustice has befallen their family. That is why it is important to pass this bill - to prevent such occasions from happening in Ohio.

Thank you for reviewing my testimony. I urge you to vote YES on HB 236.

Sincerely,

Julie Bowers

Delaware County

