

Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for HB 236.

We are now a few years past the fiasco known as the “Covid Year” and, hopefully, lessons have been learned. During that year, our elderly died alone in hospitals and care facilities because of the direct actions of government entities eliminating the ability for family members to be with their loved ones in their last days. It was immoral and unnecessary and should never happen again.

In our case, we were restricted from visiting our daughter in an Intermediate Care Facility. This too, was unconscionable and can never happen again. Residents of Intermediate Care Facilities and Group Homes CANNOT speak for themselves and CANNOT defend themselves. Yet, the facilities denied access to this population for an entire year, and WHY? Because they could and because elements of state government gave them cover to do so.

Over the past 5 years, the state of Ohio has averaged over 19,000 Major Unusual Incidents (Neglect and Abuse) pertaining to our Developmentally Disabled population. Despite this, parents/family/advocates were denied access to their loved ones.

Over the past 5 years, the MUI reports were:

2019	20,152
2020	17,943
2021	18,440
2022	18,635
2023	20,464

It should not be overlooked that the lowest numbers were the Covid year 2020 and extending into 2021. The reason? Due to restricted visits, fewer outside observations were going on. While the numbers for any year are unacceptable, there appears to be a clear correlation between the restrictions and the reporting of incidents.

We now know that the entirety of “Covid” was a fiasco. The challenge, of course, is to know it beforehand and to have structures in place to defend our citizens from abuses by our government. As with any legislation, the wording of this bill could be more direct and specific. However, as a society, we must take a stand and ensure that we NEVER repeat the folly of allowing our most vulnerable populations to be ignored.

We must NEVER allow government personnel to place our elderly in a position to die without loved ones by their side.

We must NEVER allow our disabled population to go without observation by loved ones.

We must NEVER allow people to be ALONE AGAIN in these situations.

I urge the committee to vote yes on HB 236