

“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”

“Involvement of family members is imperative to collaborative, ethical and patient-centered care in the Intensive Care Unit.” – Sarah Beesley from the Center for Humanizing Critical Care.

It has been well known for decades and has been proven in multiple clinical studies that family presence and involvement in patient care has consistently led to better patient outcomes and better patient safety.

Governor DeWine in November 2020 also stated, *“each one of us also has an obligation. We all need to protect each other – our families, our friends, our neighbors, and Ohioans we don’t even know. “¹ Unfortunately, Ohio citizens were deprived the right and duty to protect their loved ones that were being held captive at hospitals and nursing homes. Regrettably, the government’s public service message during COVID “we’re all in this together” did not include the thousands of vulnerable and sick citizens that were facing the fight of their life – alone. A fight many lost when they took their last breath - in isolation.*

It is well established that patient outcomes are not only dependent on their medical care – but also, and in times like COVID when there was no known effective medical care – it is the physical presence and the emotional and spiritual support that only family members can provide that has been shown in multiple clinical studies to positively affect patient outcomes. This family support effect can save lives.

Unfortunately, many Ohioans needlessly suffered alone during their most vulnerable time. A time when they needed us the most – a no visitation rule damned our loved ones to an undeserved forced solitary confinement. Like many, my mother was hospitalized during the cruel no hospital visitation period of 2020. The hospital no visitation policy did nothing to protect her or our family. In fact, if family would have been present at bedside she would not have died.

In the 11-13-2024 letter from Representative Miller and Lear to the Senate Health Committee, it states, “Our citizens deserve the best laws and services we can legally give them.” I agree. As legislators, you have the responsibility to weight both sides of an issue when passing bills. In this case, there was a projected public health worse outcome, but those perceived concerns did not outweigh the taking of long standing patient rights. Public policy is created to protect our vulnerable populations – the no visitation policy prevented that.

Never again should we allow our health care facilities to become virtual internment camps.

Never again should public health agencies or health care facilities create rules, mandates or policies that deprive citizens of their basic patient rights.

Never Again, Never Alone.

I implore our legislators to vote YES on HB 236 - the Never Alone Act.

¹ https://www.thecentersquare.com/ohio/article_c3519a7a-1d3f-11eb-bddb-9b2a89ca55b9.html