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11/19/2024

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.”

My father, Kenneth D. Parrish Jr. was admitted to Genesis Healthcare System in Zanesville, OH beginning of September 2020 for Covid 19. We were not allowed to visit him during his stay and he was put on the ventilator twice without us being able to see him or speak to him prior. My father was a very strong man and never cried. Unfortunately, being sick and isolated from his family completely broke him, and he cried several times when we were able to speak with him on the phone.

On Friday, September 25, I received a phone call from my dad and he sounded very well. He was excited that they lifted the visitor restrictions so he could start seeing us.

On September 29, 2020, My dad was transferred to Select Specialty Hospital in Newark, OH to continue his recovery. Dad was looking forward to being transferred to Select because he was anxious to get stronger by getting more therapy at this hospital. He was enjoying eating all of his meals without restrictions. He helped me pack his things up prior to being transferred that evening.

While my father was at Select Specialty Hospital, we were only allowed to visit for a short amount of time each day. When we were allowed to come in, we were shocked at the condition that we would find my dad in and the lack of care he was receiving. Below are just a few of my notes from the care he had received:

Sunday, Oct 4, 2020 – Visited Dad at Select. Definitely doesn’t look as good as he did last Tuesday at Genesis Hospital.

He was struggling and complaining of mouth discomfort. The nurse said that was normal to have dry mouth from the bipap but never checked his mouth. He had a tube of biotene on his tray table that he was using by himself to put on his tongue for the discomfort. His bed smelled like urine.

Dad told me the respiratory therapist was very mean to him today (not sure if he knew for sure if it was the respiratory therapist or nurse). He felt like he had a string in his mouth and asked her to take off his bipap so he could get it out. She refused so he had to yell at her to take it off. She then jerked it up off his face and shoved the sponge on a stick harshly around inside his mouth. He was in tears when he told me what happened.

I got some lotion to massage his feet. The socks he had on were the same socks he had on when I saw him last Tuesday at Genesis (5 days ago). When I took the socks off, they were full of flakes of dead skin and his feet smelled bad. It was obvious that his feet had not been washed nor had his socks been changed since he had been in this hospital.

My dad grabbed his urinal to pee and not realizing there was pee already in it, it spilled on his bed. I helped him clean it up. This is the reason why his bed smelled like urine, he never had an empty urinal to use.

The next day on Monday, October 5 at 8:03 a.m., I received a text from Dad saying he needed help but unfortunately, I was not allowed to go help him until 2 p.m. when visiting hours started.

When I arrived at 2 p.m., I found a large cup of urine overflowing on my father's tray table, he was lying on a wet bed with no sheet under him. I also noticed urine on the floor. It was obvious that he had went all day with no one checking on him or helping him. His condition was declining, and I was not allowed to stay past 6 p.m. to help him or make sure he was able to get proper care.

I have several more examples of this type of horrible care that my father had to endure while we, the family, were not allowed to be with him. We had no rights nor were we allowed to give him the comfort care that he so rightly deserved

The worst part was things went undiagnosed and he suffered tremendously at the end because of the lack of patient rights and family not allowed to be there to oversee his care. On Oct. 14, 2020, I stayed with him a little after visiting hours, that day he was in horrible pain and now I know he was actually dying. The charge nurse (Mariah) and her co-worker Brittany came in and told me I had 5 minutes to leave or they were calling security. After arguing with them over their unprofessionalism, rudeness, and lack of concern for my father, my dad in all of his pain, told me just to go and those were his last words to me for he coded the next day and never recovered. If the administration at this hospital had shown as much due diligence about their patient care as they did about their strict visiting hours due to COVID-19, my father would still be alive today.

In addition, I did contact an attorney after my father passed. I was told I could not hold the hospital accountable because the hospitals were protected due to Covid-19. This definitely gave them a free pass to provide horrible care in the privacy of their walls. This is why it is so important for Ohioans to have the ability to have access to a loved one in the hospital. The family cares more for their loved one and needs to be there to advocate for and comfort them during a health crisis and at the end of life. I ask all committee members to please vote yes on HB 236 so no other family has to experience what my family had to experience.

Thank you,

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