

It is imperative that essential caregivers be given access to enter facilities to have personal contact with their loved ones. My mother died on 11/1/20 while being a resident in a nursing facility. She was admitted to the facility several years ago because of her need for 24-hour care due to her advanced Parkinson's disease. Though her body would fail her unpredictably, she continued to be very sharp in her mental status, keeping a keen wit, doing puzzles, drawing and being the self-proclaimed social chair. This started to change this last March when the State of Ohio made the decision to lock down the nursing homes due to Covid-19. With her being essentially confined in her room, all I could do was watch through windows, plexiglass and Facetime, as my mother rapidly declined physically and emotionally to the point of failure to thrive. Depriving an individual from human touch and close interaction with their loved ones is cruel and inhumane and should not be tolerated by any civil society. Our attempts to engage key governmental decision makers with frequent outreach to the governor, state representatives and the LTC Ombudsman failed to gain any meaningful change or attention to the negative outcomes their well-intended policy was producing. As has been stated many times, the cure cannot be worse than the disease. I am encouraged that HB 770 is now being brought forward so that additional families do not have to experience what my family did. Having to watch your mother spend the last nine months of her life in isolation, with only being able to communicate with her from a distance will haunt me for the rest of my life. Caregivers need access to their loved ones. They need to be allowed to provide them comfort, let them know that they are loved and are not alone and have the opportunity to observe firsthand, the care they may or may not be receiving. Please pass this bill for everyone that still finds their loved ones in this horrible and unforgivable situation, so that they will be spared this same experience.

Gary Grote