

Good afternoon and thank you chairperson, co-chair, aging and long term care committee, and our Honorable State Representatives for giving me this opportunity to speak about HB770; a bill that would allow a family member access to their loved ones as a caregiver.

My name is Scott Reynolds. I come before you today to make you aware of the impact this bill has on thousands of family members, and most definitely, our elderly in facilities. Let me begin by saying, elderly individuals in facilities are not a political pawn but a human life who deserves love and care from a loved one just as much as those before me. Please don't take anything I'm about to say personal, however, keep in mind this could be you one day.

On March 11, I enjoyed dinner with my mother, conversed, went for a walk, and watched a movie in her Alzheimer's unit. At 7:30 p.m. I was asked to leave the facility due to a lockdown ordered by our Governor and the CDC.

On or about week two of standing in the rain talking with my mother I could see a change in her demeanor. She started crying and asking me why I could not come in to at least give her a hug. I used the excuse of having a bad cold. At about week four, the disconnect was taking a toll on her. She started banging on the window screaming and crying wanting a hug from me. Imagine if you will, the heartbreak we were going through. It was taking a toll emotionally on everyone. April 12 mother seemed better due to an Easter egg hunt that was happening in her wing. She was excited since this was her favorite holiday - until I came to the window to visit with her. The rage started up again as well as the suffering and pain she was going through being without her child. Having Alzheimer's, her familiarity and routine had been stripped and I could see the toll it was taking quickly. Did anyone think of this prior? My guess is no.

On or around the first of May, mother was withdrawing and getting weaker by the day. The disconnect from her child, no physical touch, lack of exercise was starting to affect even her walking. She was also falling into a deep depression. So, soon after that I had a small protest of around 40 people at my mothers facility to draw awareness to the situation. I was not the only family member seeing a loved one decline rapidly like the speed of light. It was disgusting to watch. If you have not experienced this, I invite you to a window visit next time I go and see my mother. Have you ever had to stand outside watching your mother cry for you and see a stranger try to hug and console your mother? It was heart wrenching. This is why HB770 is so important.

After many conversations with Governor Dewine, Ursel McElroy, and my State Representative, I really wasn't seeing any results. Sara Carruthers, who is my representative in district 51, was getting nowhere with this issue as well. She stated when she went to Dewine over this issue his reply was, isn't it just sad, and brushed her off. I will say, Ursel was a saving grace for me and someone to talk over issues that were at hand.

On June 22, my mother's facility called for me to go to the eye doctor with her since they had no extra staff members to sit with her during her exam. I was overjoyed for the opportunity to be with my mother. The visit with her was amazing! She dug her nails in my arms and would not let

go. The doctor was compassionate as well and let me spend over an hour with her in the exam room alone. He could not believe my mother had deteriorated so quickly since December. Two days prior to this, she was taken by ambulance for a fall. She laid in the ER for five hours by herself waiting on three stitches, unable to communicate, alone. Why? The staff had been furloughed at the hospital and I was forbidden to go inside, so I sat on the sidewalk waiting for her results. Not only that, she left the facility fully dressed only to find her clothes missing at the hospital and was sent back in a gown.

June 24, my brother and I were called in for end of life. She was believed to be passing that evening. As I got to the facility, my brother was already there. Upon entering the facility, mind you I was brought in through four hallways and a kitchen instead of the separate entrance to her wing, my brother was told to leave. They stated, only one sibling was allowed in for end of life. I knew this was a lie! So I called Governor Dewine, Ursel McElroy, and Beverly Lambert. Within 45 minutes, thanks to Ursel, my brother was let back in the building.

Upon arriving, waiting for my mother to die, I crawled in bed with her laying in her own urine that had seeped outside of her diaper. I sang to her, kissed her, rubbed her hand, talked to her, and cried until about 3:00 in the morning. Suddenly, the unimaginable happened. She came to! You heard me! Came to! The nursing staff was shocked. They could not explain it. I can! It took my mother's child to console her to bring her back to life! How can no one understand this is beyond me. The next day she was singing and eating solid food. However, after spending five days and nights with her I was told to leave the facility since she was now stable. I was beyond heartbroken. Seeing her cry for me was complete HELL as I was walking out of her room. My mother was the last person on anyone's mind including our Governor who didn't seem concerned one bit when I called him to let him know what happened. This is why HB770 is so important. Covid is not the only killer, so is loneliness. My mother is witness to that. Within days of the end of life ordeal she was declining yet once again. Ever watch your mother drool and not have the strength to hold her own head up? Well, I have. To give someone in her condition five days of joy and strip it away is inhumane. Dog laws are better than what is in place for our elders! It's absolutely disgusting. As the days and months go by, my mother is nothing but a shell. Alone, and now suffering from Covid.

I could go on and on with more horror stories but now, let's get to why HB770 is so important. HB770 is important on so many levels. No one thought about the side effects from isolation, depression, and the loneliness that has declined elders in facilities. Did anyone ever think of the side effects with someone diagnosed with Alzheimer's? No, they did not. All familiarity and routines have been stripped only to progress this disease. Did anyone ever think about what the disconnect has done to so many families on both sides of the glass? No, they did not. Did anyone ever think the staff could keep up with demands brought on with the pandemic and the grueling schedule and hours working with a bare minimal staff after furloughs? No, they did not. Did anyone ever think of the disconnect that 266 days would take on family members not comforting their loved one? We have not only lost 266 days with our loved one, but many more months, possibly years.

Let me get this straight. It's ok to allow staff members in and out of facilities, living their life, but a family member is shut out? Don't you think a designated family member would be more cautious? My mother's facility can't even keep regular staff, only to bring in nurses from multiple agencies to care for loved ones, and this is ok? So, multiple people in and out of the building, door dash coming in and out, staff leaving to get lunch and dinner, but, this is ok? No, it is not. As a primary caregiver, it's stated in HB770 that, essential caregivers will limit contact with outside individuals. Do you believe that's happening now with staff? No, it is not. It also states that, they can implement more restrictions and measures if the county is experiencing a high number of cases per the county advisory system. Again, don't you think an immediate family member would be more apt to be more cautious to insure precious time with a loved one? Obviously, the guidelines set in place have not, and will not work. It's time our loved ones go out with dignity rather than feeling abandoned. Can you imagine if you will, this could be you one day? How would you feel? After all, a parent is there your whole life. Isn't it time we are there for them when they need us most? So, if you aren't for this bill, you are ok with the barbaric way elders are treated? Please keep in mind, this could be you one day, on either side of the glass. Please do the right thing and support this bill. It is inconceivable that someone would not support this bill and give a family member dignity during their final days. We are tired of visiting our loved ones like a zoo exhibit behind a glass cage.