

Hi my name is Lynn Meldon. I am a nurse and am married to an ER physician. So I understand the thought process behind the COVID precautions. However, I am here to speak to you today as the only child of a 94 year old woman who resides in an assisted living facility due to her beginning stages of dementia. One of my “selling” points to my mom about moving into an assisted living facility was that she wouldn’t be so socially isolated. Who would have guessed, 3 years later I would be socially isolated from her?

I, and the other families for whom I advocate, need HB 770 passed. We are both essential caregivers and family members. Essential caregivers can:

observe and communicate important details and changes in our loved ones’ condition and/or behavior to the medical staff;

we provide emotional support and companionship that they desperately need from their own families, not just the staff;

we can provide assistance with activities of daily living;

and most importantly, we can preserve and promote quality of life for our loved ones.

With the current visitation setup, none of these things are possible.

Prior to COVID, at the minimum, I saw my mom weekly to take her to get her hair done and then we would go to Panera for lunch. This was “our” time. I miss physically being with her and hugging her.

Since March 12th I have been assigned 3 visits with my mom for a total of 70 minutes that’s just 3 visits in nine months. I am grateful for these visits, but when HB 770 is passed, it will make a huge difference in her life and mine.

While my mom has a strong faith in God, I can hear in her voice she is sad as weeks have turned into months that she hasn't seen or been with me - with any type of consistency. Also, cognitively she seems to be slipping more. She didn't recognize me immediately, on the first and third visits, but I did have a mask on. She's lost weight, and when I commented about it, her response was "Oh why bother to eat? I can't see you, go to church, or get my hair done. This Bill will allow me to go into her apartment and spend time with her — time that at 94, is so very, very precious.

With regard to my mom's facility, they have continued with communal dining and activities since March. For this I am grateful. They've attempted to keep some type of "normalcy" for them. However, the staff is not the residents' loved ones - they are not me. In August the residents had to quarantine in their respective apartments for 14 days due to a COVID outbreak. My mom fell in her apartment during this time and how sad was it, that when the nurse called to tell me, I was hoping that mom hurt herself bad enough that I could go be with her in the ER.

We hear about COVID fatigue in the news and people are talking about it but how do the elderly feel? Not only have they not left their respective facilities but, they can't even see and spend time with their loved ones, other than for may be a 20 minute visit, 6 feet apart, where your daughter is wearing a mask with no consistency as to when we will be together again. The isolation is slowly killing them versus COVID - my mom is losing her sparkle, she's losing weight and she misses me. Has anyone asked our

loved ones what they want? I can tell you that if you would ask my mom, she would say I want to see and spend time with my daughter.

Please consider passing HB 770 to help not only myself, but my mom. This is about essential caregiving - not a visit. This is about companionship, assisting our loved ones, and helping out the respective staffs amongst these facilities. Thank you for your consideration and time.

I leave you with this quote from Mother Teresa:

“I still think that the greatest suffering is being lonely, feeling unloved, just having no one.....that is the worst disease that any human being can ever experience.”