

March 30, 2022

Dear Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, and Ranking Member Antonio:

Thank you so much for your interest in issues regarding Independent Care Facilities during a time of continued restrictions caused by the Coronavirus. I understand that every situation is unique, but the implemented policies during the pandemic caused enormous hardship for the residents of most elder care facilities.

My situation involved my mother who, in an advanced stage of dementia, was mute, incontinent, and totally immobile, restricted to a wheelchair and dependent upon another person for all ADLs including cueing to swallow and cough to clear her throat due to silent aspiration. She was on oxygen at night due to hypoxia, and suffered from sleep apnea and atrial fibrillation. In compliance with geriatric and PCP doctors' orders, my mother had private individual non-agency caregivers to assist her 24 hours a day. These caregivers are extremely difficult to find and to maintain. I was always able to fill in for open shifts and cover for cancellations until the facility locked down due to COVID. Our facility generated a policy that made it impossible for any family member to fulfill any caregiver role such as the one that I previously held. Due to Covid-19, I lost six caregivers on my team who were either immune compromised or had to care for their own loved ones. The facility assigned one of their aides to fill in. This aide was totally unfamiliar with my mother, was a male aide and did not have the authority to care for certain medical issues my mother had at the time. Due to the facility's restrictions during the Covid-19 crisis, my mother suffered:

- A Stage III coccyx wound which started to heal because I insisted on the Cleveland Clinic to care for the wound,
- Two hospitalizations for 10 days due to medication administration of incorrect thickening consistencies causing aspiration pneumonia,
- A severe fall requiring stitches around her eye, torn eye lid, and fractured knee cap
- A current UTI infection at the time whereby treatment was delayed due to lack of phone call response from the facility

Even though we had absolutely terrific 24-7 caregivers, I still believe that I was the most observant and vocal POA for my mother. I am a qualified caregiver and I feel that myself, and others like myself, should have been allowed to care for our loved ones, at the very least in the comfort of their own room, and especially during the Covid crisis. Their mental, physical and emotional health and well-being are directly impacted by having loved ones in person by their side for reassurance and companionship. No facility nor their staff can take the place of a resident's own family member.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
MF Dumm