

Chairman Wiggam, Vice- Chair Stephens, Ranking member Kelly, and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for HB 618. I strongly ask for support of this legislation. It is of utmost importance that the Governor and Ohio Health Director has proper checks and balances for orders issued. While there are many different areas of this bill, I wanted to focus on an area that has impacted my family dramatically.

At the end of February 2020, my grandmother was residing in a nursing home. My grandmother had just turned 92. She was doing well with physical therapy, and deeply enjoyed the social aspects of her nursing home. In the morning you would find my grandmother having breakfast with another resident, followed by the morning social hour. After lunch, my grandmother would be found praying the rosary and attending daily mass at the nursing home. She would also attend the afternoon social hour, and then enjoy dinner with a friend. My grandmother was vibrant and a joy to all those she encountered. Unfortunately, she suffered a seizure and needed to be transported to the local hospital. While she was being transferred from her nursing home bed to the stretcher, her left arm was dislocated. When we spoke with the doctor at the hospital, we were told the swelling needed to go down before they were able to fix her arm. Her follow up appointments would be scheduled in mid-March. She had daily pain and waited for those follow up appointments. Then the pandemic hit. Her nursing home notified us that one family member was welcome in to come say goodbye before the shut down. My brother took my grandmother's care packages from all of us, and assured her we would be back to visit as soon as we were able. She had family visitors at least 3 times a week. From her 3 grandchildren and her 4 great grandchildren. Her only child (my father) passed away in 2003.

As we entered into the end of March 2020, it was very apparent that this shutdown was not going to last just a few weeks. My siblings and I took turns calling my grandmother. We attempted to facetime, but her poor vision made that difficult. My grandmother also had mild dementia, which made this entire situation so challenging for her. We would explain why we were not allowed to visit her in the nursing home- and she would forget. I cannot imagine how confusing and devastating having ALL social support cut off suddenly was for her.

Around mid- April we were getting daily updates from the nursing home. My grandmother had become depressed. Being quarantined to her room and losing all of her social interaction was criminal. This was not the way to live out her final days. I also need to mention that her nursing home never had a Covid-19 outbreak. There was 1 case, and that resident made a full recovery. My grandmother also had every single one of her follow up appointments canceled. Her appointments were deemed "non-essential."

In May of 2020, my grandmother had started to give up hope she would ever see her family again. The reports we received from the nursing home staff were heartbreaking. We made the difficult decision to transition her to hospice care. The hospice company tried their hardest to advocate for my grandmother. They recommended that she receive family visits as part of her hospice care plan. Those requests were denied, due to Governor Dewine and Dr. Acton's orders. My grandmother passed away May 19, 2020. At the time of her passing, she still had a dislocated arm, due to her treatment not being deemed "essential." By the time we were "allowed" to see her, per the orders, she was actively dying. I am grateful we got to say goodbye, but this is not how any nursing home resident should have died. Cutting the elderly off from their loved ones for months was awful. We don't know anyone in a nursing home personally that passed away from covid. We do know quite a few people who lost elderly loved ones from depression. Going months without family, visitors, and social contact in the nursing home has killed many in Ohio.

Requiring the approval of the General Assembly before ODH may declare and enforce quarantine and isolation, would add much needed checks and balances. I will never get that time back with my grandmother, as many others will never get the time back they lost with loved ones this year. My dear grandmother should never have been denied medical care for a dislocated arm, as I know many others were denied proper medical care during the shut down.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

Sincerely,

Mary Petty