

Chairman Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide support testimony for HB 236; “The Never Alone Act.”

On September 21, 2021 my father in law, Vlado, was rushed by squad to Mount Carmel Hospital East because his blood oxygen levels were dangerously low. That is when the nightmare began in our family and we saw our father in law alive for the first time. My father in law was an immigrant to this country and spoke very basic English. Immediately, I reached out to various patient advocates to explain to them that he would need a translator when a nurse or doctor would speak with him. They could never find a translator who spoke his language. We repeatedly pleaded with them to allow his son or wife to be with him. They both had recently recovered from COVID and we could provide proof from another hospital that they had it. They told us that only at the end of life could someone be with him.

Our family lived in a total nightmare for over 3 weeks. Repeatedly the nurses would tell me that his anxiety is extremely high and he can't calm down. That he would not sleep at all at night and he would constantly watch the monitors. My father in law was not a fearful man. He was a bold, courageous man who never feared anything. We tried to talk to him as much as we could but it was impossible for him to speak to us with the bipap mask on his face. The doctors rarely called us. Days would go by and we would not have any idea how on he was really doing. We could not see him or advocate for him.

In his final week we knew that he was quickly losing his battle and we again begged the doctors to please allow his wife to see him before they put

him on a ventilator. They knew the prognosis. They knew that he would die. Again they told us no not until the end of life. That conversation was on a Sunday. The next morning they called to tell us they had to put him on a ventilator to give him a “chance” to fight. Two days later they called to tell us that his kidneys were completely failing and that we needed to take him off of life support and NOW it was ok for us to be with him. Three days prior the threat of COVID was so great that we could not see him and talk to him while he was awake. However, three days later because we had to take him off of life support we could see him. He died with his son and wife with him but he was on a ventilator and he was completely sedated. Even though they could see him they could not speak with him. The protocol of denying access to my father in law is the reason my father in law died. If we could have been with him everyday and encourage him, advocate for him and speak for him I know he would be alive. He gave up because there was no one there who loved him or cared for him to help him fight the battle. He gave up because he knew he could not fight alone.

We as a society can never ever allow this to happen again. Ohioans need the ability to have access to a loved one to advocate for and comfort them during a health crisis and at the end of life. No one should ever be allowed to be left in a hospital alone. They should always be allowed to have a loved one with them 24 hours a day. Not just for a few hours. Every single patient in every single hospital in Ohio should be allowed at least one advocate with them at all times. I ask the committee members to please vote yes on HB 236.

Sincerely,

Dana Nestorovski



Vlado Nestorovski

3/24/53-10/14/21