

Good Afternoon Chairman Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross and Ranking Member Somani and Members of the Health Provider Service Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Substitute House Bill 236.

My name is Sandy Enderby, I have been a nurse for over 17 years and have had many opportunity in my career to work within the senior community. Currently, I serve as the Executive Director of the Ashland County Council on Aging. Our agency is a part of the Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging, which serves North Central Ohio. Our mission is to provide community based services to those sixty years and older in Ashland County. We provide services to assist our senior citizens to remain safe, healthy, active and independent in their homes for as long as they are able. The agency also serves as the advocate voice for our senior population. I am here today to give testimony in support of Substitute House Bill 236. Never Alone Act.

I can attest as a nursing professional that this bill is crucial for the well-being of our senior population in a congregate care setting. House Bill 236 will assist patient focus care by allowing an emotional support advocate to the patient or resident, if they request it. It is my testimony that patient focus care is meaningful and valuable, especially in the senior population. It uses a holistic approach that considers the persons social, emotional and spiritual needs. In my experience, this approach has been shown to improve the patient's conditions and reduce anxiety and stress in both patient and family members. As a nurse who has worked in a long term care setting, it is always encouraged and beneficial in the recovery process of the patient or resident to have the presence of family or friends on a daily basis. I am in full support of House Bill 236 in allowing a designee to advocate or be an emotional or spiritual support person for the patient or resident in a congregate setting. It will preserve and protect our senior citizens during a very difficult, stressful and often the final stages in their lives.

On a personal level, I would like to testify on behalf of my family and share our struggles and frustrations when we were denied visitation for my mother in an assisted living community. Mom was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2019. We had no other choice but to admit her into a memory care facility. My brother and I

visited her daily, we would take turns having lunch or dinner with her and would often sit with her in the evening and watch her favorite game show on TV.

In 2020 due to the mandates related to Covid19, we were restricted from having contact with her. At first it had to be in an outdoor setting, with masks and distance and eventually we were prohibited from any personal contact. Over the next several months we noticed a significant decline in her mood, she had become depressed from isolation and struggled to remember who we were. She couldn't understand why we had to stand outside her apartment window to talk. Why a nurse had to be in the room during our visit or why we had such little time to visit. On numerous occasions when mom was transported to the hospital for treatment of dehydration and fever, we were unable to be at her bedside in the emergency room. As you can imagine for an 80 year old with dementia, surrounded by strangers in an unfamiliar place, it was very stressful and scary.

As her disease progressed, her health continued to decline and her days were obviously limited, I made the decision to take a leave of absence from work and move my mother out of the nursing facility and into my home, so that she would have family at her side during her last days on this earth.

I was fortunate to have the ability to provide care for my mother and had an employer who would allow me the time off work to do that. There are so many others who didn't have that option. Many people passed away without a loved one holding their hand or sitting at their bedside during the final hours on this earth.

In closing, Substitute House Bill 236 will ensure that any patient or resident during their most vulnerable time in their lives, will have someone by their side.

Thank you again for the opportunity this afternoon to provide testimony in support of Substitute House Bill 236 and I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have at this time.