

Chair Kelley and Vice-Chair Feldman, my name is Brenda Fried, and I am here to ask for support of Bill 505. Shortly after my dad passed away, I remember my mom saying to me, your dad remembered what I forgot. It was then that I realized that her forgetfulness was a little more serious than I realized, and I wasn't going back to Louisiana. It was time to come home to Baltimore and take care of my mom. It was as if she turned off the lights after he passed away, and her dementia escalated quickly.

For me, I had to turn my back on my corporate career of over 30 years where I had risen to the level of Vice President of Marketing during my highest earning years. I was taking my mom to her many doctors' appointments. I was ordering, monitoring, and dispensing her meds, paying her bills, doing her grocery shopping and, when I would take her with me, it would take hours. I would take her out to eat, whatever she wanted to do. My objective was that she would not have to worry about anything. I just wanted her to be happy.

I couldn't take on a traditional job as I would have had to take too much time off just about every week to care for my mom. I needed the flexibility to work around my mom's schedule. I did some consulting, Chair Kelley, but I couldn't spend enough of the right hours building my business. I studied to become a real estate investor, but working with contractors was beyond challenging and ultimately, they destroyed my business and cost me many thousands of dollars. I never took any money from my mom, and I had to continually take distributions from my IRA, thereby putting any thinking of my own retirement far, far in the future.

Yes, I also think about my own future. My grandmother had Alzheimer's. My mom had Alzheimer's. What's going to happen to me? Both my grandmother and mother had children who loved and cared for them. I don't have children. I will need to be prepared, if G-d forbid I fall prey to this horrible disease, to arrange for my own care. But I will tell you that the 7 years I was my mom's primary caregiver cost me dearly financially. But would I do it all over again? Absolutely....because she is my mom.

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