

IN THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

IN SUPPORT OF SB642

HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED WAIVER SERVICES – ALTERATIONS AND SUPPORT

MARCH 3, 2020

Good afternoon Chairlady Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I appear before you today in support of SB 642. My interest in this legislation stems not simply from my experience as a practicing attorney and member of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, but also due to my personal story concerning my mother. It is this story that I wish to share with you today.

My mother was born in 1920. She purchased our family home with my father in 1955 and remained there after his passing in 1970. She always expressed her desire to live at home. Unfortunately, she developed dementia in early 2012 and staying at home wasn't possible. During that year, my sister and I tried multiple facilities in the Boston area, but the care was never represented, and my mother was miserable in each one. It was an extremely stressful time for our family.

Finally, I found a facility in Rockville, MD specializing in dementia care. I spoke with the owner at great length about the difficulties that my mother had experienced in Boston. He explained that due to his facilities greater number of staff, higher staff quality and intimate surroundings, he had experienced previous success with residents who had not done well at other facilities. I was favorably impressed.

In January 2013, after substantial deliberation, my sister and I took the bold step of moving my mother from Boston to Rockville. Within a month after her arrival, my mother's attitude changed dramatically. The antipsychotic drugs that were previously prescribed, were eliminated. She began smiling again. I visited her three times a week. We sat in the sun together and sang songs with the other residents and staff. It wasn't home but it was the closest thing to it. The staff really cared about my mother and over the next five years became part of our family.

The disease progressed, but I always knew my mother wasn't alone, and was getting the best care possible. In December 2017, however, my greatest fear became reality. We ran out of money and were forced to move my mother to a nursing home in order to qualify for Medicaid. The move was more than she couldn't handle, and she died three days later.

Passage of SB 642 will make it easier for people to receive medical assistance outside of a nursing home. Had it been in effect in 2017, my mother would have been able to remain with those who cared about her and who she had come to know as family. Instead, she died frightened and alone.

Respectfully

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