

Hello,

My name is Grace Nuckels. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Essential Family Caregiver bill. I am passionate about this bill as I know firsthand how critical this bill is for residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities and also their families. The isolation of these residents from their families is having a devastating effect and causing failure to thrive, and in many cases causing their death. Time is of the essence! My husband and I reside in Hagerstown, MD. My dear 95 year old Mom has resided at Coffman Nursing Home here in Hagerstown since late January of last year. My husband and I have been a steady presence in her life for many years. We have not been allowed any direct contact with my mom since the first week of last March when visitation was locked down due to COVID - no comforting touch of the hand nor the soothing warmth of a hug. We have been barred from assisting in her care, providing critical support, or being able to effectively advocate for her for the past 11 months! This has gone on way too long! We have visited the majority of this time through a window or a glass door. My mother has dementia and cannot understand why we do not come inside to visit or have any contact with her. We have watched her severely decline due to the isolation from my husband and me. She suffers from depression and anxiety as a result. This is the story of hundreds of nursing home and assisted living

residents and their families across Maryland. I cannot begin to adequately express how heartbreaking and agonizing it is to watch a cherished loved one fade away, simply dying from a broken heart. To have my mom reach for us and beg us to come in and hug her is almost too much to bear. I can think of few things more painful than to see a loved one suffering and distraught, and not being able to hug, soothe and comfort them. We want our loved ones to be safe from COVID, but we also want them to be happy and possess quality of life. They need to be allowed contact with their family in order to thrive and enjoy their last years.

Allowing one family member inside to help care for, support and advocate for them is critical to the overall health and well-being of these residents! These are not casual visits. They are visits that are absolutely essential to assure that our lived ones thrive and live the best life possible. We cannot allow these dear people to continue to decline and die from this isolation! This Essential Family Caregiver program is truly a matter of life and death. Again, time is of the essence! I beseech you to please pass this bill and put this program into effect as soon as possible!

Thank you.