



January 28, 2021

Chairwoman Delores G. Kelley & Members of the Senate Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: The Essential Caregiver Bill

Dear Senator Kelley,

My name is Julia McGlaughlin, and I am writing to you in support of the Essential Caregiver Bill written by Senator Paul Corderman. I am an RN, and my entire career of twenty years has been in skilled long-term care and assisted living. I have always had a passion for taking care of the elderly. Ultimately, after twenty years, I am now the Clinical Executive Director and in the Administrator in Training Program at Fahrney Keedy Home in Washington County, MD.

It is an honor to support and have a voice regarding this particular bill. I have lived and breathed the COVID pandemic, along with my staff and residents in a nursing home and assisted living setting. I have seen the virus's dire effects on our senior population firsthand. I am not only speaking of the actual virus; I am also speaking of the extreme isolation that COVID forced our residents into. Back in March of 2020, when we were locked down, none of us ever would have dreamt that we would still be in this extreme isolation for almost a year now. It took nine months for Fahrney Keedy to have a severe COVID outbreak. However, our residents suffered mentally and physically with the protocols and orders that we had to follow to keep them from contracting COVID even before our major outbreak. There is one story that still makes me emotional, and that I think about every day. March thirteenth, 2020 was a heartbreaking day. Fahrney Keedy had to close its doors to our resident's families and loved ones. There was one man who religiously visited his wife every day for hours and fed her every meal every single day. He had become more than a visitor to me. He reminded me of my own father. He was so devoted and loyal to his wife who had become bedridden. She felt secure and comfortable here at Fahrney Keedy along with her husband's loving devotion day in and day out. They had been married for sixty-four years. On March thirteenth, we had to tell this man who had never missed a day of seeing his wife in the four plus years she was with us, that he could not come in. He cried, and we cried for both of them. At the time, we did not know how long this would go on. It was not that we disagreed with the lockdown as there was so much unknown about the gravity and destruction of COVID. The situation was just so unbelievable, shocking, and emotional to separate our residents from their loved ones. We found ways for the residents and families to connect virtually. However, that just is not the same as having

your husband there feeding you every meal, holding your hand, and giving you comfort when you need it the most. The resident was not able to understand COVID and why her husband was not coming to see her. She started declining in March after he could not visit. She passed away by the end of March. No one can convince me that she did not die from a broken heart. Almost a year into COVID, we have the tools needed like rapid COVID testing, vaccinations, and appropriate personal protective equipment to allow for these essential caregivers to be with our residents. This man may not have had a certification or license as a caregiver, but I would argue he was essential to his wife and her well-being. This bill could allow the devoted husbands or wives or other loved ones to give our residents what they need emotionally which will improve their physical well-being as well.

I hope in reading this story, you will consider supporting the essential caregiver bill. Can you personally imagine having someone you consider essential in your life taken away from you? At the time, it was what was necessary. Almost a year later, facilities have adjusted to living through the pandemic, gone through severe outbreaks, and have followed the guidelines. Please allow the facilities and local health officers use this bill to make appropriate decisions on who is essential and how to make it safe for those essential caregivers to give the personalized care our residents desperately need. Those of us who have been through this pandemic and watched our residents become depressed, isolated, and develop weight loss know what is best for them. COVID is not going away anytime soon. Let us give our residents in assisted livings and nursing homes a voice and a chance to receive the additional essential, personalized care they so deserve.

I want to personally thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Your support in this matter would be appreciated and life changing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julia McGlaughlin RN".

Julia McGlaughlin RN/BSN/AIT
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