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Bill SB 0047

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To: Paul.Corderman@senate.state.md.us

Cc: MMedina@senate.state.md.us, Vaughn Delegate <Vaughn.Stewart@house.state.md.us>, Ben Senator <Ben.Kramer@senate.state.md.us>, cullison.bonnie@house.state.md.us, Charlotte Delegate <Charlotte.Crutchfield@house.state.md.us>, Dad <joem.432@gmail.com>

Dear Senator Corderman,

Thank you for sponsoring your bill [SB 0047] seeking to further regulate Assisted Living Facilities. Today I am reaching out to you on behalf of my grandmother in the hopes it helps in passing your bill and expanding visitor access. **Family visits are essential for resident health and well-being**, and at the very least, we should allow a single "Designated Essential Visitor" to be chosen by each resident.

My grandmother became a resident at an Assisted Living Facility in late 2019 when her condition required a greater level of care than we were able to provide at home. On March 14, 2020 the facility went into "lock down." **Visitor access remains limited, sometimes fully restricted for weeks on end – with no end in sight.**

We know that loneliness is harmful to all citizens during the pandemic, and significantly more so for residents at assisted living facilities, often manifesting in severe and sudden weight loss, mood disturbances, and overall decline in quality of life. My grandmother has not contracted COVID-19, but she has declined significantly both physically and mentally. She moved in weighing 109 pounds, today she is 86 pounds (most of her weight loss has occurred since restrictions were placed on visitor access), and more frequent urinary tract infections are indicative of chronic dehydration. We can no longer be there to support her eating and drinking at mealtimes, and have had to increase her intake of supplemental nutrition drinks. **My family is fortunate to have my grandmother in one of Maryland's best Assisted Living Facilities – oftentimes, negligence in care is not intentional, but rather a result of a facility being understaffed and without the resources to provide proper care to residents.**

Although the offer of window visits and phone calls are a nice gesture, these options are not practical for my grandmother. Hearing and vision loss, coupled with a decreasing level of consciousness, necessitates **physical presence and touch** when we visit her. Whether it is my hand, or my dog's paw, this loving touch brings my grandmother comfort -- and the feelings are mutual! In this way, I am an Essential Caregiver for my grandmother, yet I am precluded from entry.

Together with my father (Joe Mills), we have taken on the responsibility of leading the Family Council (bi-weekly virtual meetings) to maintain communication and support between family members of residents. We are frustrated! We need and welcome your help. We have tried to communicate these concerns to facility administration and county officials with NO SUCCESS. The facility staff are doing all they can but are equally frustrated by their corporate office and by local officials. **We need clear legislation at the State level to put reasonable regulations in place.**

Respectfully,

Julianne Mills

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