

To: Appropriations Committee

Regarding: Medicaid Live-In Care

From: Pamela Milici 1971 Tuttle Av. Cheshire, CT 06410

Re: My father, Peter Caputo 184 Franklin Rd. Hamden, CT 06517

My father was living for approximately 1 month at the Arden House nursing home in Hamden CT when I decided he should be cared for in his own home using the Medicaid live-in care.

I want to tell you about my father and how he is a perfect example of someone that should have home care and not live in a nursing home. He is a vibrant person and both my parents had been singing and performing their whole lives. (Sometimes people would mistake him for Perry Como and we would laugh about that). As a matter of fact; it was only 10 years ago that they were performing variety acts at all the nursing homes in the area. He was in perfect health and did not take any medications. He lost his leg 5 years ago due to a hiking accident, but that did not stop him. He has a positive attitude. Two years ago my mother became very ill and we had to move her into a nursing home. My father remained positive and would visit her every day. Now with the help of the live in aid he still visits my mother every day. But then he gets to go home. My mother cannot. There is a big difference. My mother has too many illnesses, such as renal disease, diabetes and dementia and she can't walk. My father is the opposite. He is in great health, except for the dementia. He cannot be trusted to live alone. If you were to meet him right now you would barely notice the limp and you may not even notice the signs of his dementia. He is a very charismatic and charming man. But the signs are there, especially in the evening. Sundowning. A term I know all too well now.

Let me give you a quick background: When I look back at the past few years, I can now recall signs of my father's dementia. It had been going on for a year or so before I realized it. There were small clues that I did not pick up on. Now when I look back I wonder how I missed the signs. They now seem so obvious.

The turning point was when my father was hospitalized for a urinary infection that caused delirium. He was sent from the hospital to a nursing home. During the one month stay it was determined that he can no longer live alone and needs 24 hour care. He was diagnosed with moderate dementia. My father would stare at the walls in the nursing home and he hardly ate. My mother lived in the same nursing home around the hallway but my father could not figure out how to get to her room and he was too embarrassed to ask for help. This is the same hallway that he walked every day for a year on his daily visits to my mother. But now he was afraid to leave his room. He was like a shell of a man that I knew only weeks earlier. He used to sing and play piano and laugh. Now he hardly spoke. He could not carry on a conversation. He was confused and depressed. He was getting worse and not better.

Here was the turning point for me: A short conversation with a stranger in the nursing home elevator. She said that sometimes people get better when they are in their own home and I have the option of doing that. My father does not have to stay in the nursing home. I have a right to bring him home and

get care for him there. "ARE YOU KIDDING ME?" I thought to myself. It was like the clouds disappeared and the sun came through. I know it sounds crazy, but that's how I felt. So that became my mission. Dad was going home.

We had a meeting with the nursing home and they were very surprised of my decision and it seemed like they were trying to talk me out of it. They turned to my father and asked what he wanted to do. They reminded him that he was comfortable there and his wife was nearby to visit. Keep in mind that Dad was hardly speaking back then. But he spoke up and quietly said, "I want to go home." It was like music to my ears. I was so proud of him because I know it was difficult for him to speak. I knew that my father was still inside that shell. I could not wait to get him home and see if he improved.

It happened very quickly. I called many agencies and found Griswold. We were very lucky to get an awesome caregiver named Eunice and she is still with us to this day. On my father's first day home there was a huge improvement immediately. He sat at the piano and started to sing a little. His neighbors came by to visit and my father greeted the mailman at the door like he always did.

So, there is a happy ending to this. We are a year later and my father is doing great. Sometimes I notice a slight decline when he has trouble with everyday words. However, he still remembers all the words to his favorite Frank Sinatra songs and he is singing with a local choir. His health is good and he takes dementia medication. He still visits my mom every day. He still enjoys grocery shopping, going to church and visiting his 93 year old sister at her house (she also has an aid). This would not be possible if he was in the nursing home. I count my blessings every day that he is home and cared for. We are fortunate to have an incredible aid and we feel like she is part of our family. She has a great sense of humor and is a perfect match for my father's personality and is a hard worker.

I can tell you 100% that without the help from Medicaid and the live-in program, none of this would be possible. My father would not be able to pay for 24 hour care. I live in a different town and work full time and cannot give my father the full care that is needed. I know he feels like he is independent even though he has an aid. There is something to be said for having pride and dignity and feeling independent as a senior citizen. You see, I fully understand the difference between a quality of life in a nursing home and in your own home. I am sad that my mother has to stay in a nursing home, but she needs an extreme amount of medical care. My father does not. He needs care with his daily routine and to be kept safe and allow him to still participate in the community. My parents are a perfect example of the health system working the way that it should. Not everyone needs to be in a nursing home. I can sleep every night knowing that my father is happy and cared for and living in his own home with the quality of life that he deserves.

Thank you for your time.

Pamela Milici