

Written Testimony By Irma Rappaport for Public Hearing – Human Services Committee  
Bill 6634 – March 25, 2021

I read over Bill 6634 and am concerned because it says that essential support persons “may visit,” “in accordance with rules set by the Commissioner of Public Health,” “if essential support person complies with any rules,” “rules will be written to restrict visitors that can include essential support person,” and if “the commissioner determines that such visitation will benefit the health, safety and well-being of the resident.” Such language is very general, does not list what the rules might be, does not necessarily give us any more assurance that essential caregivers are important to the quality of life of their love one in the nursing home ( truly only if they are able to be with them in person and not six feet apart) and gives no dates of when policies will be set forth, when we are in need of change now.

Meanwhile, after over a year of isolation, loved ones in nursing homes have multiple problems as a result that need our attention as soon as possible. We can’t rely on the Department of Public Health to give our loved ones the same attention – they have hundreds of complaints and are not able to quickly address problems. I emailed them over a month ago about my the temperature in my mom’s room being 82 when I was finally let in a few days before she died. I was angry that the home ordered the windows kept closed, despite such heat in the room. When I saw her, the corners of her lips were bleeding, she was so dry. I was told it was the hottest room in the building (she changed rooms during the pandemic so I didn’t know). I asked the Department of Health to investigate this problem, but they still haven’t gotten back to me.

There are vital things that families who help their loved ones in nursing homes did for them before the pandemic and whatever it was they did to help them thrive then, they must be allowed to do now that they themselves are fully vaccinated.

I prefer the term “essential caregiver” to “essential support person” which sounds more like a therapy dog. Please know that the advocating we do for our loved ones is care. Feeding them is care. Moisturizing their body is care. Like the rest of the language in this bill, the term “support” instead of “care” is too weak.

Thank you.