

Helena Case

On-Line Testimony

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03/16/2021

On-line Testimony for Bill No. 1030

It has been brought to my attention that I have the ability to come forward to defend one of my passions for many years. I have been a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for 28 years and I have worked in both a nursing home and hospital environment as an aide/technician caring for those who depend on others for everyday things most people take for granted. Most people entering a hospital are sick and may be able to do very little for themselves. In a nursing facility, a resident gives up almost everything they know and have worked hard to attain. Some have very supportive family or friends and have very little cognitive ability. So, they count on their loved ones and healthcare personnel for simple every day functioning.

Covid has been very difficult for the residents because they have been confined and blocked off from the outside world. All of their lives were practically put on hold. Some of them were up in years and one year is alike a lifetime for them and their families. Some of them did not make it to see everything open back up and I believe essentially died from loneliness. Aside from not having their family or forced to communicate through something that looks like a book to them (iPad visits) all contact stopped for the residents. Physical touch, hugs, a kiss on the cheek, holding hands with their loved ones was not permitted. It was very sad, and I was one of the ones fortunate enough to be able to work through the pandemic and become even more so like their family. I cried with them, took care of them, tried to reassure them they would see their family soon. I tried to explain multiple times that this was temporary only to be counteracted by

the fact that I was coming and going with freedom while their family members were not allowed to visit. I could not explain but only agree with their side, knowing all of this was to protect them, some of the most vulnerable population. My heart breaks for those who never got to be with their loved ones while they were dying from Covid or elderly living in a nursing home. How scary to enter a hospital situation this year and not only wonder if you will ever make it out, but not have your loved ones nearby.

I believe there was a lot done this year that was done well, and a lot was done very poorly without consideration of what the residents wanted or needed as human beings. I was fortunate to live in and work in a fairly isolated area aside from the city folks that fled to our area for safety. Somehow the nursing facility I work at was able to keep Covid away from our elderly population. We did have staff contract Covid, but the residents were kept safe. We did our job, but it has been a very lonely year for them all. Some of them stopped eating and became frail and lost their drive to live because they lived in isolation. They couldn't eat in the main dining room and interact with each other, community activities ceased, there was no hairdresser, exercise classes. Eventually they played bingo from their doorways and they did staff parades or ice cream carts down the hall. All in all, we did a good job, but I watched otherwise healthy elderly folks dwindle away, cry for their families, and families with broken hearts that used to visit nearly every day get completely cut off from their elderly loved ones.

I ask you this, what if it was your loved one? Wouldn't you feel as though their rights were stripped from them. The human desire to be with those they love. Put yourself in their position.

Thank you,
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