

Tania Ryea – Daughter of LTC Resident
An Act Concerning Long-Term Care Facilities - S.B. No. 1030 – Support

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 20

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Tania Ryea, and I am from Tolland, CT. I would like to express my support for bill S.B. No. 1030, An Act Concerning Long-Term Care Facilities.

My Mother, Janice, has dementia. Psychiatric care, family/loving interactions, emotional support, and medication management are critical to her care. If she does not have personal, loving interactions, she becomes anxious, and restless. If she does not have someone to talk to, she becomes depressed. If her daily hygiene needs are not met, she will become physically ill. If her eating needs are not met, she will lose weight which can cause additional health risks. If her physical needs are not met, she will become immobile.

Pre-Covid 19, myself or one of my two sisters would visit my mother, daily, to ensure all her needs were met. As soon as we entered the unit, she recognized us as her daughter, walked up to us, hugged us, and would proceed to having a conversation with us. We brought her food we knew she enjoyed, food she fed to herself. We changed her bedding weekly and did her laundry. We provided her with basic hygiene needs to ensure she was clean, and this also reduced the potential for bacterial infections. We took her out every other Sunday and every holiday for family outings attended by 4 generations. She was happy, mobile, and required minimal medication.

During the Covid lockdown, my mother was held prisoner with no visitation. Her dementia prevented her from using the telephone which left no means of communication from her family. I'd hate to think she felt abandoned, alone, and scared. She was not able to verbally express her feelings nor were we able to determine her feelings based on her actions/behavior. We were helpless and mistakenly trusted her facility to care for her in our absence. During this time, she became immobile, stop feeding herself, lost weight, and was kept on a sedative medication longer than required. When we were provided video calls, we discovered she had unexplained bruises on her eye and jaw, and she could not comprehend a video chat. When we had our 1st outdoor visit in the summer of 2020, we discovered she was placed in a wheelchair and was no longer mobile.

The staffing levels at LTC facilities are less than adequate. The staff are not screened, tested or educated for the specific needs of Alzheimer/Dementia care residents. The PPE/infectious disease prevention procedures are inconsistent among the staff. The lack of video monitoring inhibits family members/ essential care givers from monitoring the wellbeing of the resident. This bill requests that the administrative head of each long-term care facility ensure that its staff is educated regarding best practices for addressing the social, emotional and mental health needs of residents, and all

components of person-centered care. The Bill requests that The Department of Public Health establish an essential caregiver program, to be implemented by each long-term care facility. The program would set visitation requirements for essential caregivers of long-term care facility residents, require essential care givers be provided the same infection prevention/ control training, and testing standards as received by paid staff. If these requirements were in place in the past, residents would have received optimal care. Their essential caregiver would have been in place thus freeing up staff to care for other residents more adequately. The family would have been able to monitor the resident, via camera, to ensure they were not neglected. by supporting this bill nursing home residents, like my mother, will be assured of having access to qualified and educated staff, proper infection control supplies and consistent family support

I am in support of Bill S.B. No. 1030, An Act Concerning Long-Term Care Facilities and all that it encompasses.

Thank You for your time and consideration. I hope you will join me in supporting S.B. No. 1030.