

DATE: March 17, 2021

TO: Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery

FROM: Diana Allen

RE: Support for 714

I am in strong support of establishing minimum staffing standards for long-term care facilities, especially memory care. My mother, Janet, had Alzheimer's Disease and spent the last several years of her life in a local memory care facility. I saw her daily – usually two times a day on my way to-and-from work. During those two years I witnessed the impact of too little staffing to meet the individualized social-emotional, medical and physical needs of residents. My mom was lucky though, because I saw her every day and made sure her needs were met. Other residents weren't so lucky. Let me share a few examples with you – and keep in mind this list is not exhaustive and not limited to one-time situations:

- Physical altercations between residents with no staff intervention.
- Residents seated in the dining room an hour before meals with nothing to do.
- Unwitnessed falls with injuries.
- Residents sent to the hospital due to dehydration.

I was never able to get a satisfactory answer on how staffing levels were determined. When I voiced my concerns about resident needs not being met, I was told additional staff would be hired once the building census went up. That was an alarming answer four years ago and it continues to be of grave concern to me now. The number of residents in a building has nothing to do with acuity and the individualized needs of each resident!

After my retirement in 2016 I completed training to become a volunteer Certified Long-Term Care Ombudsman. I wanted to be an advocate for individuals who often don't have a voice in their care. In my work now as a Certified Ombudsman, I find that much has not changed regarding how facilities report the process used for determining needed staffing levels. When asked, directors may tell me they use resident care plans for developing staffing plans, but that a written process does not exist. I'm also told that staff levels are determined by the number of residents in the building.

As an active community volunteer and family member of a resident formerly served in long-term care, I urge you to support SB 714 and require long-term care facilities to complete the DHS acuity-based staffing tool each week or be subject to set minimum staffing ratio.

Sincerely,

*Diana Allen*

