

Testimony in support of SB 714

To all who will be deciding the fate of SB 714,

This is a very personal bill for me because my mother Mary inspired it. I reached out to Sen. Gelser in desperation after yet another incident at the facility my mother was at. Weeks and months of neglect due to short staffing levels led her to wither away to 74 pounds. She survived leukemia, breast cancer, COPD, multiple broken bones, numerous bouts of pneumonia, and several gall bladder surgeries. But what finally took her down was dehydration and starvation brought about because there were not enough staff to go into her room regularly to cue her to eat or drink.

She died on Feb. 21, 2021, at Willamette Springs Memory Care facility. The months leading up to her death were horrific: laying in soaking wet briefs and soiled bedding for hours. Dried food left on her side table, mold in her drinking straw, poop in the bathroom that had been there for weeks despite telling the staff about it. She developed bedsores from being left lying in her bed, the staff grateful she was sleeping so they could skip her room and take care of the other residents.

My family witnessed firsthand care partners so frustrated with their working conditions they quit mid-shift. We listened as frustrated employees confided how much they dreaded coming to work because it was so hard to care, yet not be able to take care of these frail elderly residents and give them the respect they deserved simply because they couldn't spare one extra minute.

The people who become "care partners" at these facilities do it because they are kind and compassionate. I am grateful to the staff that did their best to take care of my mom. I feel deeply sorry that they are put in stressful situations, deciding who gets the care and who gets skipped simply because there is no way they can take care of everyone. This level of caring and stress leads to burnout and the turnover at these facilities is high because it is so hard to go to work every day. If there were more staff to take care of the residents properly, the number of falls, broken bones, hospitalizations, and other injuries that result from low staffing would decline. The number of reports being filed with Adult Protective Services would go down because so many calls are about neglect.

Supporting SB 714 is a win-win for everyone: the residents get the care they are paying for, the care partners would be able to do the job they love knowing they can focus on the people they are paid to care for. Facilities would benefit from lower turnover due to burned-out unhappy staff. And communities would benefit because we could trust that making that hard decision to put our loved ones in a facility to get the care we can no longer provide means our loved ones could live out their days with dignity.

We must advocate for those who can't. Please vote yes for Mary's Bill, SB 714

Sincerely,

Michelle Haunold Lorenz