

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Anderson, Senator Lieber, Senator Robinson, and Senator Taylor:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 714.

In August 2019, decades of hard living caught up with my father-in-law (then age 70). He fell outside his home while taking out the trash and landed himself in the hospital. A night there turned into a month, and during our daily visits my husband and I watched his dad's moderate dementia worsen into something resembling psychosis. He'd been an exceedingly competent man: a project manager who worked for the city and the state; a successful small-business owner; and a loving caregiver to his ailing wife until her death. Suddenly, that exceedingly competent man didn't know what year it was, what city he was in, or who the people entering and leaving his hospital room were. With two small children at home we could not bring him to live with us after his discharge, so we found him a home in a Memory Care facility in SE Portland.

The first few months were hard for him, but he received thoughtful, attentive care. My husband and I were in regular contact with a kind and skilled caregiver, and we watched his psychosis improve. After three months, his dementia was back to its baseline, and he was able to move out of Memory Care and into the Assisted Living section of the same facility. Then a new management company took over in January 2020 and everything changed.

Over the past 15 months, he has experienced a profound sense of isolation that has significantly worsened his condition. He's often paranoid, depressed, and tearful, and we have no confidence that his daily needs are being met by the overburdened care staff. After COVID shut down the facility, we would hear from my father-in-law ~10 times per day. He was confused and lonely, not understanding why we couldn't visit him. It was heartbreaking, and we had no window into what, if anything, the staff was doing to soothe, comfort, or otherwise help him. He's an unreliable narrator, and we had no established relationship with any of the ever-changing employees. We were in the dark; he was locked in. We suspect the caregivers were doing their best, but it wasn't enough. The facility needed more better trained employees with knowledge of the complex social-emotional needs of this particularly vulnerable population.

The facility's administrative staff was and is also overwhelmed. Early last year, it took almost 5 months to get a simple billing issue resolved. The quarterly service plans stipulated in our contract were literally nonexistent—we did not have one during ALL of 2020—and the only one we've had in 2021 was a mess. The Executive Director of the facility couldn't answer simple questions about cost or care, and a follow-up call was similarly unproductive. We have no idea where his \$4K+/month is going. We would certainly love to know.

It is clear that the facility needs more (better trained) staff to tend to the physical, emotional, and social needs of its residents, and, secondarily, the administrative needs of their loved ones. I'm certain its deficiencies are not unique. Our elders deserve better; my father-in-law deserves better. That's why I strongly advocate for SB714.