

Monday, March 1, 2021

To whom it may concern:

My name is Renee Lucas. I live in McMinnville Oregon. **I am an avid supporter of HB 3128.**

Three years ago, my aunt Sharon Newton suffered a significant stroke. It left her paralyzed on her left side and her cognitive abilities damaged. The decision was made to move her into assisted living, a nursing home. After several visits to facilities, we chose Lifecare in McMinnville Oregon.

Once she was settled in, it seemed all was going well. I was visiting her everyday, sometimes twice daily. I would make a point to go at different times of the day, to assure myself that she was always being cared for in a dignified, respectful manner, that continued to promote her quality of life. I was extremely pleased with her care and it seemed there were very few issues.

Visits with my Aunt always seemed to be a good time. We'd have a good laugh, she always seemed upbeat, joking and was the lady in charge at Lifecare. She made a point to know everyone's business and told it like it was. Unfortunately, due to the stroke she was showing more and more signs of dementia. At times it was incredibly challenging and could be very sad, but we made it work. We had good days and bad days.

The nightmare began after -COVID-19 precautions went into effect and nursing facilities were locked down. I was unable to visit my Aunt in person, only offered facetime/phone/window visits. I accepted this, as it was all I had. She was very sad when she realized that this was the situation. Her dementia played on her mind, at times making her believe her family had died. This was extremely upsetting to her. At times she was inconsolable. Talking on the phone with her would help a little, but not much. What she needed was a hug, a kiss on the forehead or for someone to just sit quietly holding her hand. She'd become a prisoner at Lifecare.

At times when I would talk to her on the phone/visit, she would tell me she had a boyfriend. I would play along and say "Oh how wonderful" not thinking anything of it, as she was also known to state there were bats flying outside and would often think she was at her home in Sister. It seemed to come in waves. Some days seemed pretty reality based and other days were very delusional with angry outbursts.

At the beginning of August 2020, everything seemed to implode. While out of town with my husband, I received a call from Lifecare. They were calling to tell me my Aunt had been sexually abused by a male CNA. He had confessed and stated that he'd planned it and knew that no one would enter the room. I was devastated to hear such horrible news. It was agreed she should be sent to the ER for a rape test. After returning to Lifecare from the ER, she was then quarantined alone in her room for 14 day. It seemed she was being punished for something she had no control of. This was/is unacceptable!

We cannot let this type of seclusion go on any longer, at too great of risk to the physical and mental health of these most vulnerable people. My Aunt's health has greatly deteriorated since COVID-19. She's ended up with pneumonia due to the aides not getting her up often enough like they should. She also has an ongoing UTI, going on 4 months now and it's still there.

These types of issues never existed with my Aunt until family was unable to physically monitor her care. I would hope that residents being in this type of health and abuse situation would be monitored even more closely to assure they're being well cared for. But this was/is certainly not the case with my Aunt. I will never trust Lifecare again to provide an appropriate level of care. They have failed my Aunt in so many ways, and I fear other residents too throughout this pandemic. They closed residents in as if they were prisoners. These residents were confined to their rooms for months on end. Eating alone, with little human contact, no outside fresh air, never leaving the facility. I truly believe this in-humane treatment has contributed to the progression of her dementia.

These residents need a voice. They need outside eyes on them in these facilities. Family has been denied in-facility access to my Aunt on several occasions since the abuse came to light. We have offered to be tested, to gown up, etc. only to be put off with "we'll look into it" and we've never received any further communication back on it.

I honestly believe My Aunt's abuse and chronic health issues would have never happened if there had been access to her at all times to assure proper care during the pandemic.

*I am requesting that a hearing for bill **HB 3128** be scheduled as soon as possible. The physical and mental health of too many are at risk, especially in these most unprecedented times.*

Sincerely,

Renee Lucas