

Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis
Hearing on “Examining Long-Term Care in America: The Impact of the Coronavirus in Nursing Homes”

Dr. Bernadine Chapman
Statement for the Record
September 21, 2022

Dear House Select Subcommittee,

Prior to the "lockdown" I would visit my brother 6 to 7 days a week. The time span of the visits ranged from 1 hour to 4 hours each day. During my visits some of the things I would do with or for my brother included: scratching his head, feeding him meals/snacks, watching television, engaging in "chit chat", repositioning his head/shoulders (when needed), exercising his hands and leg, and monitoring any changes in his health condition.

During the "lockdown" he developed a stage IV pressure ulcer and life-threatening infections.

During most of the "lockdown" my brother experienced an added layer of isolation because he did not have the benefit of window visits with family. He is in an inner room. Visits were not allowed in an inner room because the Facility's courtyard would need to be accessed. Video conferencing was not an option.

I requested compassionate care visits for my brother who is fully vaccinated, quadriplegic, and vent dependent. This request was initially ignored after multiple requests (emails and phone calls). After a complaint with the state of Illinois was filed visitation was granted. I do not believe any family member should have to fight to see a family member who is experiencing emotional and physical decline due to isolation. I witnessed other families visit their loved ones in the rain during window visits because the visitation policy did not allow inside visits despite new CMS/IDPH guidance.

I believe in-person visits should be legislatively supported during a health crisis in order to prevent the devastating effects that social isolation had on residents and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. In my brother's case and in the case of other residents the social isolation resulted in both emotional and physical injuries.

Thank you for your consideration!

Dr. Bernadine Chapman