

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

**Laura Bianco
Statement for the Record
September 21, 2022**

Dear Select Subcommittee:

At the request of an advocacy group we belong to, Voices For Seniors of Long Island, NY, my sister and me write this brief tale of horror with regard to our late mother.

On the topic of nursing home care with respect to our mother, we will briefly explain the 3-year period of care prior to the passing of our mother, who ultimately succumbed to COVID.

The years 2017 through to 2020 were heart wrenching and an all too often common reality of the nursing home industry.

Please become informed that the nursing home industry is a business and the lives of our most vulnerable become disposable casualties of this sad reality.

11/2017 Each year my sister and I (who have healthcare proxy) receive a notice from the nursing home facility and we decline (sign a waiver) the flu shot, as Mom had one lung. This year the facility accidentally (failed to check paperwork) and administered the flu shot. Mom developed pneumonia for the first time and began to silently aspirate (choking), ultimately winding up in the hospital. Several bouts of pneumonia began to occur since. The flu shot immediately compromised her body at age 92.

2/2018 Now in the hospital, we were told all organs were shutting down and we were told to start preparing for hospice.

12 days without food or water, we demanded a feeding tube as she was being starved to death (the tube was denied for 12 days). We fought the hospital’s decision and within 24 hours, a tube was inserted. Mom survived this ordeal.

2018 – 2020 Mom lost her ability to speak after this (until she passed).

Back in the nursing home, no mouth care was given, and we would visit and pull dead skin from inside her mouth on several occasions. Mom then started to suffer from respiratory problems, thrush, bedsores, countless urinary tract infections, obstructions in her intestines, feeding tube infections and other ongoing maladies.

Care declined rapidly, infrequent baths, matted hair, foul odor, bruises, infrequent diaper changes, and severe dry skin from dehydration and dead skin in the mouth. We would visit and provide the mouth care.

No treating physician would ever return our calls. Only nurses.

2018 – 2019 Mom had four bouts of scabies, which is a mite that burrows under the skin and can only be contracted via prolonged skin contact. It is typically transmitted via sex. My family suspected sexual abuse, as bruises were observed in Mom's inner-thighs. According to the facility, all these cases were allegedly isolated. Scabies is highly contagious, and **the nursing home facility must report to the health department by law and did not.**

We contacted the Health Department, and they never conducted an investigation.

2019 – 2020 We paid a visit to the Attorney General's Office about the health department failure, scabies, Mom's physical condition of neglect, along with an unrelated matter with regard to monetary improprieties, and the result was "no action".

March of 2020, mom was diagnosed with COVID-19 and the family was barred from visiting. Mom suffered tremendously and it was not until the day prior to mom's passing, we were finally allowed to visit. Mom was now unresponsive. Feeling helpless while watching mom labor something terrible in breathing she passed the next morning. No doctor was present, yet mom's death certificate stated she passed of heart failure, which was not the case.

For the sake of brevity, this story has been condensed and the mention of yet another matter related to financial improprieties are left out. We will mention that the nursing home farms out their accounting to a conglomerate, who was indicted for Medicaid fraud.

The changes that can be made are found in the White House Fact Sheet found here:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/02/28/fact-sheet-protecting-seniors-and-people-with-disabilities-by-improving-safety-and-quality-of-care-in-the-nations-nursing-homes/>

In order to effect changes within the nursing home industry, we would need to "get to the root" of the problem. The root is the financial incentive to put profits over care. The present system today incentivizes fraud, corruption and financial gains over the compassionate care the elderly deserve.

Thank you for hearing this condensed version of the horror our mother suffered all unnecessarily. This is not an isolated case. This is standard policy on the nursing home "business".

Laura & Sheila