

Thank you, Chairman Doggett, Ranking Member Nunes, and the members of the Committee for having me today. My name is Delia Satterwhite. I live in Austin, Texas, and my brother Stephan Morales passed away on April 16, 2020 from COVID-19 that he contracted while residing at Riverside Nursing and Rehabilitation Center here in Austin.

My brother had Dementia and in July 2016, he went to Riverside nursing home to live. I would go and visit with him on weekends and sometimes would pop in to check on him during the week on my way home from work. I would usually spend Saturdays with him, bringing some of his favorite foods, like tacos or menudo from Joe's Bakery.

When the nursing homes went on lockdown on March 13, 2020, I had seen my brother just the week before the lockdown, he was in good spirits and I had told him that I would be returning the next Saturday with my son so he could get his haircut and trim his beard. That never happened. The day before my visit I was called and told that they were going to lock the facility down and no visitors were allowed.

I asked if I could drop off the snacks I already bought, but they did not want to risk bringing the virus in. I understood that and wanted them to keep my brother safe. I would still visit sometimes and talk to my brother through the window, but it was hard knowing he couldn't have his family with him.

After the lockdown, it was hard to reach any of the staff at Riverside. They did not want to take my phone calls and would put me on hold for so long that my lunch break would be over before I could ask how my brother was doing. I would call almost every day, usually two or three times a day. No one wanted to talk to me, it felt like they were keeping a secret. No one wanted me to know what was happening. They didn't want me to know the virus was there.

I was eventually contacted on April 3, 2020 that my brother was being isolated because he was running a fever and coughing. He tested positive for COVID-19 the following week and then developed pneumonia. I requested that he be sent to the hospital to receive the medical care that he needed. The nursing home refused, and he passed away in his room on April 16. The worst part is knowing that he died alone. I wanted to be there. His family loved him and should have been with him.

When I went to pick up his belongings, they gave me a box of things for a woman who had the last name Morales. It was disrespectful to the life my brother lived. He was a good man and his life mattered. It took a week for Riverside to find my brother's belongings and return them to me.

This nursing home did not provide the care that my brother deserved. They refused to provide information about other COVID-19 cases and deaths and did not want to test the residents and staff. They never sent him to the hospital even after I requested he be sent. When they closed the nursing home they said they wanted to keep the virus out, but they didn't make a plan to make sure workers didn't bring it in. My brother wasn't leaving the nursing home, the virus was brought to him. The workers were still going home and could get the virus anywhere.

I don't blame the workers. They were doing their job. They should have been given the PPE they needed to keep them and their patients safe. And if someone was sick, they should have been given leave to stay home. The nursing homes also need to be testing everyone all the time. Someone can test negative today, but have a positive test next week. If we were testing and providing PPE, the virus wouldn't have gotten to my brother.

My brother should still be alive. I will continue to share his story so other families don't have to go through this. I still check in with some of the families of other residents at Riverside. I want to make sure their loved ones are being taken care of. Thank you for allowing me to share Stephan's story today and for this important hearing so we can all learn the truth about what is happening in these nursing homes.