

To the attention of Chair Gelser-Blouin, Vice Chair Linthicum and Members of the Committee

I am writing in support of Camera Bill SB 134

The problem with long term care facilities in general, is that they are first and foremost for profit enterprises. As such, salaries and staffing are minimal and care often takes a back seat. The quality of care is almost totally dependent on who happens to be working at any particular time. In my experience with my Mother, there are two types of employees: the ones who have an affinity for the work and truly care about the elderly; and the ones who simply can't find a better job.

When I would visit my Mother after work in the evenings, I would walk past the front desk which was usually unstaffed. Above the desk was a large board with room numbers and a light below each room. As residents required assistance, they could push a button, the light under their room number would go on, and staff would know who needed help. Many times eight or nine lights would be on with not a staff member in sight. One day I got curious and found them out back smoking and joking while the residents waited and waited to be helped.

One night I found feces in my Mother's closet. She had dementia and was frail and I can only imagine her confusion and increasing distress as she waited for help that never came. That was the last straw for me. I found a new location for her and refused to pay the final month's fee. The facility took me to court.

Prior to the hearing I ran into a woman who had previously worked at the facility and she asked about my Mom. When I explained what was going on, she nodded knowingly and said that the staff had check lists of services they were obliged to provide, but they often checked them off as being done without actually doing them. I asked her if she was willing to write me a letter to that effect, and she said yes. I won the case.

A camera in my Mom's room would have served a number of purposes. I would have been able to better monitor her well being. I could have immediately contacted the facility if something was amiss. I would also have been able to monitor the actions—or inactions—of the staff. There is also a problem of theft in these facilities which cameras would discourage.

For those reasons, and for the safety and welfare of the residents, and the peace of mind of family members, I urge you to pass SB 134

Thank you,

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