

Dear Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Linthicum and members of the committee,

My name is John Spencer and my mom, Mary Lou Spencer, lives at Hawthorne Gardens, a Senior Assisted Living and Memory Care facility in Portland, Oregon. Mary Lou is 92 years old and has lived at Hawthorne Gardens since 2019. My brother, David, also lives in Portland, but I live across the country in Arlington, Vermont, a small town in southwestern Vermont. When we decided to move Mary Lou to Hawthorne Gardens, I wanted to stay active in the care of my Mom and not let the entire burden fall to David. Being nearly 3,000 miles away, this was not easy but by participating in the Family Council, I have found a small way to contribute to her overall care.

The past 5 years have been a roller coaster at HG with COVID and over 6 executive directors in a 5 year period. Without the Family Council, I'm not sure how we would have survived. Being able to talk with other families and loved ones who have residents at Hawthorne Gardens has given us a group voice when there are problems and a chance to assist and celebrate when things are going well.

Some of the Executive Directors felt threatened by the Family Council and wanted nothing to do with us, some were ambivalent but did not hinder us, but did not want to participate, but the good Executive Directors always welcomed us and took the time to participate and listen to us. Our requests and frustrations were rarely, if ever, unreasonable, and we know that running an assisted living and memory care facility, especially during a pandemic, is not an easy job. We did not form a Family Council just to complain to management, but to collaboratively find solutions so that our loved ones had a better place to live.

I believe that every AL/MC in Oregon, and in the country for that matter, should have an active Family Council. My mom has severe dementia and cannot advocate for herself, but the family council allows me to meet with others who share similar concerns, and currently due to the excellent management, meet with the executive director, on a regular basis. We do share our concerns at each meeting, but we also plan employee appreciation events and gifts, celebrate holidays with the residents, and make friends with others who also are having struggles taking care of their elderly family and friends.

I fully support legislation to give friends, loved ones, and family of residents at assisted living and memory care facilities, the right to form a Family Council and would also encourage the management of the facility to participate in an effort to make the care at the facility the best it can be. We owe this to our parents and loved ones. Please support Independent Family Council Bill SB 228.

Warm regards,

John C. Spencer