

Testimony in Support of House Bill 3168 from Jessica McFeron, Sherwood, OR

March 2, 2025

Chair Heartman and members of the Committee, my name is Jessica McFeron. I'm the only child of Barbara ("Bobbie") Kolada. Even when my dad was alive, it was always me and her.

My mother died as a result of injuries sustained on the job as a caregiver for two adult men with developmental disabilities. After she was shoved, hit her head, and shattered vertebrae in her neck, she was alone for several hours with no way to call for help. If there had been someone working with her or a way for her to signal for help, she might be here today.

Late February 2023, I received a call that my mother was in the hospital after "breaking her neck" at work. After suffering her injuries, my mother had to spend several hours bleeding and pleading with one of the men not to try to pick her up or lick her blood. She could not move, try to get help, or care for these men. The man was non-verbal and unable to call for help. She had to wait until the shift change came to get help.



I drove down to Medford, OR, to see her and found her in good spirits despite the traumatic event. However, over the next few days, more complications started to arise, reducing the chance of a successful neck surgery. She was in a medical "whack a mole" situation, and doctors tried to stabilize her in preparation for repairing her neck, the most critical of her injuries at the time.

As my aunt flew in and I drove home to my family and work, I was hopeful we were on the right path and things would be all right. The night I returned home, I got a call I will never forget. It was from a neurosurgeon asking for my permission to perform immediate brain surgery on my mother with a 50% chance of survival. Her brain had been swelling, and they needed to relieve the pressure to reduce her seizures. The day I left and saw her sleeping and feeling hopeful she was healing was the day she was bleeding in her brain.

The following month was hell. She remained in the ICU as they tried to slowly wake her up without triggering more seizures. Over four weeks, I authorized more procedures than I can fully remember. She seemed more machine than human with her feeding tube, breathing tube, and cords all over her.

Despite the best efforts of the hospital staff, she never regained consciousness after brain surgery, and they finally called to say they didn't think she would ever come back. The doctors told me that at this stage, "a newborn baby can do more than your mom" by looking you in the eye and gripping your finger.

In March, after consulting with her doctors and exhausting all medical options, I decided to remove her from life support and stayed with her for several days until she took her last breath on March 27, 2023. It was the hardest decision of my life. Since then, I have focused on ensuring this doesn't happen again. No one should have to go through what my mother and I experienced.



I will never know what those hours of bleeding without help cost my mother. HB 3168 would provide an essential safety net for the countless caregivers across the state who shouldn't have to risk their lives simply by going to work, supporting Oregon's most vulnerable people.

When I first read HB 3168, I had to read it several times because I couldn't believe that something like this wasn't already in place. HB 3168 is an important first step in ensuring the safety and quality of care for both caregivers and those they support. **Please vote yes.**