

Testimony for SB 134

Good morning Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum and members of the Committee

My name is Judith Smith and I'm asking for your support of SB 134, a Bill that authorizes the right to a resident, or their legal representative, to use a monitoring device or camera in the resident's room in a Long Term Care facility.

My mom, Virginia Baker, was diagnosed with dementia in her 80's and lived in Memory Care for 4 1/2 years at The Rawlin in Springfield.

I would visit on some evenings and weekends, or on occasion if I had a break from work, but I never felt like that was enough.

My friend, Jewel Nelson, had a camera in her mom's room and urged me to do the same. At that time my mom could walk with her walker and needed almost no help getting around so I didn't think there was urgency to have a camera.

During Covid, my mom suffered 2 falls. The first one sent her to the hospital with a fractured shoulder. The second, 6 days later was a fall from her bed.

But I will never really know how the falls happened because I didn't have a camera.

I inquired about having a camera installed during Covid and was told no one was allowed into the facility to install one.

Mom was on Hospice and became bedridden. She could not push herself up from the bed or chair due to the injury to her arm.

As Covid settled down, I installed a camera in my mom's room.

For the first time I could see my mother without being there. I didn't have to wonder if she was safe, alone, hungry or scared. I could see the caregivers engaging with her when they came into her room. Some of them had told me how much they loved my mom because she was so sweet. Now I could see it reflected in their level of care.

I traveled frequently and the camera was a window that I could check at any time of day or night. I felt as if I was there, quietly watching over her as she played solitaire, watched TV, or worked her word puzzles.

I'm an only child. My mom had no other family or friends of her own that could visit her. Occasionally a friend of mine might visit her but I was the only one she really knew. She had Hospice support which was extra eyes and enrichment for her and I appreciated them very much.

If I saw any concerns I could easily make a call immediately or talk to someone at the facility on my next visit.

As of now, there are no laws prohibiting cameras in Long Term Care facilities and I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to place one in my mom's room while she was in memory care.

As residents' legal representatives that look out for our loved ones, we know that they may often be alone, bedridden or afraid. There should be some assurance of quality of care and safety.

Having the right to use a camera could improve quality of life by detection of a change in behavior or condition that only a loved one might notice and quickly be able to report to the facility.

As of 2025, almost half of the states in the US allow camera use in facilities and 3 are under consideration.

I'm asking for your support by voting yes on SB 134.

Thank you,
Judith Smith