

Letter in Support of the Family Council Bill SB # 228

January 21, 2025

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

I have had the opportunity to care for elderly parents and attend to them at care centers. My mother and mother-in-law were each at residential care centers and moved from independent to assisted and then to memory care living.

Like most families, I did my due diligence before selecting the facilities where my family resided—all boast of being caring and involved in the residents' lives and allowing families to participate actively. However, I did not find the case in the four places my parents lived. They did have some sort of “Residence Councils” at the assisted living facility, but family members were not necessarily invited or kept informed about them.

Communication with care facilities became even more challenging during the unprecedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic. My mother-in-law was on the second floor, making window visits impossible, and my mother was not open to the idea. Moreover, neither facility had minimal communication, exacerbating the already difficult situation.

Despite the physical barriers, the initiative taken by the families at Rawlins to meet virtually was a game-changer. The energy and atmosphere of these meetings, the support we could offer each other on Zoom, the guest speakers, and the participation of family members from out of town combined to create a strong sense of community. This successful virtual family council at Rawlins is a testament to the potential of the Family Council Bill to foster open communication and positive relationships within the residential community.

It made a massive difference in my experience of my mother’s care and my experience as she resided at the Rawlins. I felt a deeper connection to what was happening and thought I was involved and heard. It was upbeat and more valuable than a simple newsletter or the monthly dinner menu.

I attempted to initiate a similar council at my mother-in-law's residence, but unfortunately, she passed away before it could take place. This underscores the urgent need for the Family Council Bill. We cannot delay implementing this vital support system for our aging family members.

All residents' families should be encouraged to create and attend a family council. Family councils promote open communication and foster positive relationships within the residential community. However, starting a family council should not be left to the initiative of a few energetic family members. The Family Council Bill can play a crucial role.

Please support Family Council Bill #228. This bill aims to provide a platform for families to voice their concerns, share their experiences, and collaborate with care facilities to improve the quality of care. The potential benefits of this bill are immense and promising.

Thank you,

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