

### **3/18 Amendment for Senate Bill 739**

For the record, my name is Melissa Fisher, resident of Hillsboro, caregiver to two and Oregon Ambassador for the Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration.

Sponsors Senator Gelser Blouin and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony today in support of amending senate bill 739.

Last year at this time, I could not foresee the opportunity to inform reforming investigation requirements for residential care facilities. I was in fact actively caring for my father on hospice with frontotemporal dementia, my mother with Parkinson's recovering from a recent fall and multiple bone breaks, and fighting for the dignity, well-being and care needs of my aunt with dementia, Bonnie Everett, a resident of Mount Hood Senior Living, that was one of the 13 displaced following a chaotic and disruptive closure in January that resulted in numerous weeks, no months, of being moved from one facility to another, four in total, suffering multiple falls, emergency room visits, and with each subsequent move, declining even further. It took endless calls, days and hours pleading for help from anyone who would listen as I begged for a bed where she would be safe and receive the dignified care she deserved.

As her power of attorney, I had no idea how troubled the long-term care system was before this, or how large of a problem existed in the community-based care investigation process and how vulnerable residents were, or how many, many complaints have been filed by Oregonians. I am referring to page 47 in the SOQ rapid response report, the community-based care unit backlog as of January 2024 was over 4000+ licensing complaints.

All I knew was that my aunt was being put in harm's way and put at greater risk by the actions of DHS. The series of heinous events that led up to the closure of Mt Hood, beginning with the elopement of Ki Soon Hyun resulting in her dying of hypothermia in December of 2023, set in motion, a series of ill-coordinated actions that were in fact negligent and further damaging. I realized in my tear-filled cries to the state, they didn't have answers for me, and they certainly didn't see what actions they took or didn't take, as their responsibility. I have since learned that Mt Hood had been sharing months early with ODHS licensing staff that the facility was regularly understaffed and without an administrator.

Sadly, I had no idea that this was the case. When Ki Soon Hyun's death was shared by the media, I was in another state preparing to move my parents to Oregon where I could be more involved in their care. At no time did the state or the facility tell me Mt Hood was under investigation or what the outcome of that investigation might mean. I was told literally hours before end of the workday on a Friday via email – what if I hadn't read that email? I know the other families were also put in the same situation as close to midnight residents were flung here and there, with little to no belongings, critical medications, or paperwork.

I'm going to stop sharing this nightmare here and focus on why amendment to SB 739 matters so much.

What the residents of Mt Hood went through should not be without state mandated improvement. It was an avoidable tragedy and a stain on our state in how we show so very little care for our most

vulnerable. I know that this isn't the first time this has happened, but Mt Hood should serve to be the very last.

I am so incredibly thankful for Senator Gelser Blouin's invitation to join the Long-Term Care Workgroup. I learned a great deal and while not everything I wish would have been included is in the reformed bill before you; this is a very important start. If we do not move this bill forward today, we are telling Oregonians in long term care that their well-being, and care needs are not a priority.

We must ensure that in immediate jeopardy situations and extreme negligence, actions are well coordinated and swift, and residents are promptly and appropriately communicated to, and in the case of those who are unable to care for or speak for themselves, their representatives are notified immediately. In fact, before anything ever happens, there should be a plan upfront communicated to residents and their representatives in the event of such a closure.

There must be improved transparency in investigations, and vastly improved consumer protections in response times and notifications.

We are in the twilight of a potential national health care crisis brought on by defunding Medicaid. My aunt is on the program that keeps her in care. I am already exhausted with worry of that, and I know that our moral and social responsibility is to not fail her again. Nobody should be put in this position, ever. Our nation is only as great as the care we provide our most vulnerable. Please step up for them today. Don't let protections for state agencies win out over the people of Oregon. Thank you.