

To: The Minnesota Legislature & Committee

Re: SF 1918

My name is, Peggy Omarzu, and I am writing in to support this legislation on behalf of my mother, Barbara Omarzu. I grew up on the Iron Range, in Virginia.

My mother was an educator, held a Master's Degree in Education and was part of the Housing Commission that developed the Columbia and the Alice Nettle Towers to provide affordable senior housing .

Unfortunately, my mother developed Alzheimer's Disease. If in fact if any of the proposed measures in SF 1918 were in place to protect her, she would never have suffered the degradation, neglect and finally the horrible death that awaited her in Minnesota's long-term care industry.

No one, unless they have experienced it can begin to describe the nightmare a family enters when they have to make the decision to place a loved in a care facility. We tried at first to keep in the home, but home health care on the Iron Range or any small town is basically nonexistent. Eventually we had to move her into a care facility-that's where the nightmare begins.

Our first facility had 5-6 dorm style rooms on each hallway with a community bathroom shared by residents. When I arrived in Virginia one evening I stopped first to visit Mom. I found the residents had all been locked inside their room with no toilet facilities for approx. 4 days. We assumed it was also the same for food. I immediately notified the Elder Abuse Hotline, who failed to act. I also contacted the residence's owner-they had only several teenagers working there with no supervision. I had through the course of my mother's illness contacted the Elder Abuse Hotline at least 8 times, the Health Department multiple times, even contacted the police -nothing happens.

Unfortunately moving some one from a care residence is not easy-we worked hard to get a place, however before we could make the move my mother suffered a broken finger first, followed by a spiral fracture on her arm A Health Department employee did investigate the breaks about a month after they occurred, but declined to act because my mother couldn't tell her how they



happened. My mother had Alzheimer's she couldn't have remembered what happened five minutes ago.

We finally moved her to a larger care facility. Even with Mom's long term care insurance my Father still wrote out a \$6000.00 check each month. After continued negligent incidents I finally received the call-Mom's neck was broken in two places they said-we have no idea what happened. When I got to Virginia I found Mom back at the nursing home in her room with the door completely closed the back of her headboard was pushed into the door making entry hard.

She had a large neck brace on, was unconscious, and was half way off the bed. I ran through the halls looking for some one to help me at least make her comfortable. When I finally found the nurse on duty and begged her for help I was told , "I'm not touching her" Can you imagine the person you loved more in the world than anyone being treated so callously? To this day we have never received any type of explanation or apology form this residence. I use this example, if I left my dog in a kennel and he suffered a broken neck and died, the kennel would be closed, face legal charges and the owners hung in the town square. A vulnerable elderly person in Minnesota every minute of every day is being bullied, physically and mentally harmed and abused. It is our duty as a society to protect those who have no voice and NO ONE is stepping forward to protect this population.

Take my horrible store as a cautionary tale. Your parents, your spouse, your brothers or sisters will all get old-It is our duty to ensure that they receive proper and humane care, not just be grist for the nursing home industry where they have no identities, no rights, no outside intervention, no protection, no dignity and no quality of life.



Peggy Omarzu

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