

2/14/17

Testimony of Lisa Van Dusen: speaking on behalf of my mother, who is unable to speak for herself.

In SUPPORT of HB 2232.

(Video News Segment from Michael Schwanke, KWCH Fact-Finder 12)

- In 2016, 51,000 Kansans suffered from Alzheimer's disease.
- One in nine people, aged 65 or older, has Alzheimer's.
- Nearly one in three people, aged 85 or older has the disease.
- One in three seniors die each day with Alzheimer's or another dementia.
- Alzheimer's is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States.
- By 2050, the number of people aged 65 and older with Alzheimer's disease may nearly triple.
- Of all Medicare beneficiaries residing in a nursing homes, 64 percent have Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

It is through my personal experience through my mother's journey through Alzheimer's that I support this bill.

My mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's seven years ago. My father took excellent care of her at home helping her with every need, including dressing and bathing, until a hospitalization plunged her deeper into Alzheimer's. Suddenly, she could no longer stand or walk. Her confusion intensified. We were unable to care for her at home any longer. As a family, we made the decision to entrust her care to Alzheimer's specialty facility.

My mother no longer knows her husband, her children, or her grandchildren. Her short-term memory is only a few seconds long. She is unable to walk, dress, or feed herself. Most of the time she is unable to express even her basic needs and wants. She is fearful of having her diapers changed, being dressed, and bathed. She has no concept of day, night, month, or year. She is lost; vulnerable because she is entirely dependent on others. Vulnerable, because she can put herself in situations to fall. Vulnerable, because she cannot report abuse that is happening to her.

After concern that multiple bruises on my mother's face was from abuse, the care facility suggested we install a camera in her private room. The camera was installed in the open, with the staff informed, on a dresser in her room. The camera proved invaluable to my mother's care. I could check in on her during the night and see how she was doing. Several times I would find that she was teetering on the edge of the bed trying to stand. I contacted nursing staff and a bed alarm was installed to help prevent a fall, and cushioned mats were placed by her bed to help prevent injury in case of a fall.

While reviewing video for the week in September, 6 months after the camera was installed, I watched in horror as my mother was being abused by a caregiver. The verbal and physical abuse has shaken our family to the core. It has been devastating and heart-breaking to see our loving mother suffer from Alzheimers. To make the decision to place in her in a facility and now to watch her abused has caused an enormous amount of pain and guilt for our family.

The caregiver had worked at the facility for over a year, and the management believed her one of their best employees. The facility was in shock, as the video informed them the caregiver was not as they had thought. The caregiver was arrested for assault. I, along with the care facility, filed complaints with the Kansas Department On Aging. Concerned the caregiver would be allowed to continue to work in healthcare after learning she applied for a diversion program, my family and I contacted the media. KWCH Fact-finder 12,

Michael Schwanke completed a story that aired February 2. The segment documented the account, and encouraged change for the care of our elderly.

Although hard, we feel very fortunate that we discovered my mother's abuse. Without the camera installed, we would have never known of her mistreatment. We believe that through the use of the camera, and the arrest of the caregiver, we may have been able to prevent abuse of others with Alzheimer's.

My mother is at another Alzheimer's care facility that allows cameras. She is now safe. Last week, I received a call that she had fallen out of bed in the night and caregivers had found her on the floor. My mother is unable to use a call light to alert caregivers of her needs. She was attempting to stand up. The nursing supervisor asked if I had reviewed the video. She found it valuable to find out how it happened so they could add additional safe guards to keep her from falling again. The video was able to serve as a training aid for helping the staff know how to better work with our mother.

Through our experiences, we believe cameras in nursing facilities serve the following:

- 1 - Help prevent abuse and mistreatment by reminding caregivers that a senior is being watched and recorded by loved ones
 - 2 - Catch abusers, like the abuser of my mom, that are brazen enough to abuse even when they know a camera is present
 - 3 - Serve as a means to determine how a senior has fallen and how to prevent falls in the future
 - 4 - Serve as training aids to staffs on how to work most effectively with individual seniors
 - 5 - Peace of mind for family members, as they cannot reasonably be with their loved ones around the clock
- Our family has discovered many opportunities through this experience to improve the Kansas system that protects our most vulnerable seniors, those with Alzheimer's. One of these is allowing families to have cameras in their loved one's private rooms. With many reputable care facilities allowing cameras, why would other facilities object?

Thank you.