

COVID 19 TESTIMONY - July 26, 2020

Dear Sirs :

My statement is my own, based on personal experience, as an essential worker, a nurse in a residential group home and a daughter of a 92 yr old woman with Alzheimer's, in a nursing home.

I do not offer my words as a complaint, but with an overly whelming amount of concern.

Due to my position at the group home I was privy to many mandates similar to those in nursing homes and how they were to be executed. Also I bear witness to how rapidly things were changing, often, not daily, but hourly.

I've been an advocate for the elderly for a long time, much to my displeasure and shame, NYS lacks cohesiveness for understanding the daily trials of our elders. We are denied access to protection, due to our age and our residences.

Our wounds are barely covered and the pandemic ripped the bandaid off the gaping wound.

First and foremost, safe staffing, and the blatant disregard by federal and state lawmakers to protect residents in independent living facilities all the way through to nursing homes.

Eighteen months ago I sat with four others, in Senator Rivera's office and Assemblyman Gottfried, stating they could separate the Safe Staffing bill so nursing homes would be covered, it never happened. Our Governor demanded a study about cost and necessity for increase in staffing, to be completed by 12-31-19, to this day the public has never seen the results.

CMS guidelines published on Feb 16th and March 4th stated exactly how nursing homes should prepare for the pandemic. That is our question did they ? Who followed up to see that they did? If they weren't compliant what measures were taken to rectify the situation ? Were they instructed to not accept any new residents if they already had staffing issues ?

My mother was residing at a memory care facility when she sustained a hip fracture. After eight days in the hospital she was to be moved to a rehab facility --- this is where our story begins.

My mother was moved to The Hurlbut on March 10th for intensive, inhouse rehabilitation, this facility was not our choice. I've already stated the CMS guidelines that both the hospital and nursing home were aware of ---- the public was not. I actually believe it was purposeful not to inform the patients and their families of the government's warnings. When my mother was discharged neither the hospital's social worker or medical staff prepared us or offered a different solution other than sending my mother to a nursing home. The nursing home also kept the

secret. Exactly 48 hours after my mother entered The Hurlbut, they shut their doors. I am still not permitted to visit with my mother - again it's a secret on why they are still keeping us out.

It appears that no accommodations were considered, let alone provided, for the healthy, leaving hospitals, but needing short term or long term care. Publicly we all felt blindsided by what was being done in these facilities. Our collective governments (county, state and federal) had a knee jerk reaction to emptying hospitals to make room for COVID cases. This act caused the death of healthy individuals and who weren't even long term care patients.

The very painful part - no one cared enough to value the lives of the elderly - a COVID positive patient's life superseded the vulnerable.

Did strike teams enter these facilities ? Did they receive essential PPE's, adequately supplied ? Did the facility prepare ? It must start with management !

Yes, agreed this is all hindsight. The public is still unaware of most of it.

Gratefully my mother is still alive and has remained negative. Yet instead of receiving her PT and OT as required by CMS, it stopped. According to The Hurlbut and NYS Health Dept. they were following CDC guidelines. Guidelines we never saw - yet how my mother was treated, was not how other nursing homes treated their residents under the circumstances. The Hurlbut put up a wall of silence, contact with families was nonexistent. Since my mother did not meet her goals in the three weeks allowed, that was paid for by Medicare, she now started paying for a room in a facility she didn't want to be in and couldn't be transferred. My mother lost her residence at her memory care center, she could not afford two rooms, it had been her home for two years.

My mother now had to keep her door shut at all times, she was not given PT, they removed her walker so she wouldn't try to leave, she was subjected to 13 weeks of bed baths. They wouldn't shower residents since the communal shower was outside their room. Her walker was returned to her only a few weeks ago, (June) after they found her on the floor , performing " an unassisted transfer ". Until the pandemic, closing someone in their room without their permission, removing their walker so they couldn't ambulate safely, no showers, and isolation from family would be considered neglect and abuse.

How can anyone condone these actions ? - It was not just the pandemic. It was the mindset of the facility. I believe in your investigation you will see facilities are not held to equal standards. NYS health dept cannot say 19 deaths occurred and all CDC GUIDELINES WERE BEING FOLLOWED.

I'm imploring this body to take a stand - many laws need to be changed. I have tubs of documentation, letters from the NYS Health Dept - there's never an issue with the facility.

In two months we will have flu season, along with COVID. You must protect the healthy, no matter their age ,along with the ill. The laws you make now must be forward thinking and protect the vulnerable. You have eleven more years of baby boomers on the doorstep of elderhood. Where are they going to go when they have to face these obstacles ?

I'm putting my faith in trust in you all , at the very least you will read my words.

Please recognize many of us want to be part of the solution. I'm willing to give testimony to how the "healthy" were treated and sacrificed.

God Bless All Of You - May He Keep You Safe,

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