

Testimony of Mary D'Ercole Pritchard
Ombudsman 2002-2016
New York Statewide Senior Action Council board member.

**Before the Joint Legislative Committees on Health, Investigations and Government Operations,
and Legislative Commissions on Administrative Regulations Review Commission.**

August 3 (or 10), 2020

Good Morning. My name is Mary D'Ercole Pritchard and I was a New York State Ombudsman from 2002-2016 and currently serve on the board of Statewide Senior Action Council. I live in Schenectady county, in the city of Schenectady.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here because the crisis in long term care that has been exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic has impacted my friend. There has been a growing crisis in the quality of care and the oversight by the state in residential long term care. This includes inadequate staff to resident ratios and less than optimal visitation facilities by the long term care ombudsman program.

My friend has a 95 year old mother whom she used to visit twice a day to feed lunch and dinner, was unable to do such since the pandemic began. Her mother fell out of her wheelchair and was found later, on the floor, by a therapist who was walking by her room. She broke her nose and was taken to the hospital. When she was released, the family hired a private aid to come to the nursing home twice a day to feed her. My friend found out that her mother had developed a bed-sore because she had been left in her bed from dinner until lunch the next day. That bed-sore has since turned into a wound and she is now is receiving wound-care treatments. She has declined so much that the nursing home suggested that she be put on comfort-care. The family agreed to this but asked that morphine only be given after they were notified, but this request was disregarded and she received morphine without the consent or knowledge of the family.

Safe staffing or an ombudsman like myself could have helped in a situation like this one. The ombudsman program needs to be a separate entity in place to help the residents of the nursing home. An example that I can provide was when I was an ombudsman under the umbrella of the capital district Red Cross. It took me three years and various nursing home directors to finally convince the nursing home to have a family council with monthly meetings. We brought in speakers to address the needs and concerns of the family.

It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that there is quality care, accessible to those who need it, and that those receiving care are able to age with dignity. I urge you to include solutions to the long term care crisis in your budget negotiations and throughout the legislative session.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I would be pleased to address any questions you may have.