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HB1167 Nondiscrimination in Health Care Coverage Act  
SUPPORT

My name is Joseph Collier, my brother Joshua and I are twenty-two and twenty-one respectively. The following account details my family's experience in keeping my father alive whilst he is in an unresponsive state. I am writing this in order to continue our efforts, to provide a voice to others in a similar situation, but most importantly, so that you will know why we will keep fighting for his life, his liberty and to uphold his choice to live.

On October 24th 2020, we received a call from the hospital. My father had gone into cardiac arrest and had been brought from his long-term care facility, to the hospital's emergency room. Not two days earlier, he was due to be moved out of his care facility and into our home. **Four months before that, the global pandemic had provided an increasing uncertainty as to the safety of my father.** Because of this uncertainty, my brother and I put our education on hold in order to return to Maryland and ensure my father's safety.

**In the days following October 24th at the hospital, the majority of senior staff made it clear that they did not want to keep my father alive.** They would repeatedly berate us for even suggesting that he could be released into our care, rambling on about the impossibility of being able to take care of someone in his position. They would outright threaten to end his life or have him released to another long-term care facility. This was in spite of us reminding them that the reason he went into cardiac arrest was due to the wounds and the mistreatment he suffered in such a facility. These threats and belligerent behavior only ceased when we sent the hospital a copy of his advanced directive and when our lawyer contacted them. For context, in every document and discussion, legal, philosophical, theological or otherwise, my father insisted that he be kept alive. I still remember when he looked me in the eye and said that no matter what happened, he wanted to be kept alive, no matter the cost. So, it was only through the fear of legal consequences that the hospital began the process of my father's discharge to our care.

The hospital wanted us to come in at 4 am to bath my father, have shifts with him around the clock and to be judged on our performance of tasks done after our first attempt, and compared to that of experienced medical professionals. Throughout these thoroughly unproductive days, we would point out how we were not being taught so much as we were judged and that 4 am for a sponge bath was the hospital's schedule, and that we would make our own schedule at home. Eventually, we outright stated that it was clear that the hospital was firstly, inexperienced in training families secondly, that

they were making taking care of my father appear impossible and thirdly, how **all of this was clearly an attempt to pressure us into letting our father die**. They sheepishly had no rebuttal and in the following days started to make our training somewhat practical and pragmatic.

During meetings intended to discuss my father's progress at returning home, rather than directing us to home care institutions, the majority of senior staff at the hospital initially wasted this time asking why we would sacrifice our youth, keeping a man alive who had an extensive history with Parkinson's disease, a man who was practically half dead. On one such occasion, when speaking with the social worker, she had raised her voice at my mother and my usually quiet brother interceded. He spoke back and told her not to talk about our father in such a degrading manner. He told her of when my mother was recovering from a c-section and my father had a Lisfranc fracture and how my father, who could not walk, would take care of all three of us for three weeks. Despite his pain and inability to walk, my father would crawl on his hands and knees to take care of us. This is a man who did not give up on us. So, we will not give up on him.

**The hospital later released my father, they failed to order the entirety of his medication and upon his release a critical staff member of the home care team could not be present to set up a portion of his equipment.** A few hours after coming home, his oxygen levels became consistently low and an ambulance came to take him to another hospital. Again, we fought for his release. Some doctors claimed that "if God wanted my father to live, why did he give him a cardiac arrest?" When I stated that I wanted my father to be surrounded by people he loved at home, they twisted my words on the spot and made it look like I wanted to bring him home to have a funeral. They claimed that because he was sent to the hospital so soon after being released, that it would be a recurring pattern.

**Despite everything, my father is home now. Taking care of him requires discipline and practice. My father is stable and we have a working routine. We eat with him, talk with him, laugh with him and we love him. Regardless of the state my father is in, he has rejoined his loved ones as an integral part of our lives.** It would have been easy to forgo moving house in such an unpredictable time, to continue our education and leave my father in his facility and just pray for his well being. But as I told the staff at the hospital: "we do not do things because they are easy, we do them because they are worth doing". We do things to honor and uphold the wishes and promises we make to our loved ones and we stand by our loved ones as they would stand by us. Once I made this statement to the hospital staff, the room fell into a long silence. This tells me that for all the cruelty and guilt that they were willing to place upon our shoulders for the death of our father, they themselves were most likely unable to bear any of it should it have fallen upon themselves. That guilt which is so much more than just the death of a loved one, that guilt of having to live with yourself afterwards and knowing that you betrayed the trust of your loved ones. If we do away with the trust we place in our loved ones, how does one expect trust to exist elsewhere in the world?

When one of our citizens is given capital punishment, we feel sorry, we feel pity for their loss of life and we empathize with their fear of dying, it hurts us. If this is how we feel when the guilty die, what do we feel when our innocent loved ones are put to death?