

I was very disheartened to read "Get These Items Passed in the 2021 Session" in the New London Day on January 6, 2021. School vaccines, property tax reform, marijuana legalization and online sports betting seem to be the priorities with NO mention of our loved ones in Long Term Care Facilities who have paid the price during this pandemic. Isn't anyone listening to the devastation that has and still continues to happen in the nursing homes. We were not prepared when this pandemic struck in March of 2020. We now know the devastation that has been allowed to occur and we MUST take proper steps to be better prepared for the next pandemic in order to protect the most vulnerable.

Our mothers, fathers, grandparents, spouses and children have been isolated, deprived socialization and discriminated against, frightened and alone. They have been living in fear for almost one year now. Residents and families have been robbed of their most vital needs – love and affection. Their freedom has been stripped away as well as their dignity.

I am asking for the establishment of an executive order to be included in the 2021 session for an Essential Family Caregiver Designation. An EFC is a person who provides nursing home services to their loved ones daily. Providing support, comfort care, providing for all emotional and psychosocial needs, monitoring their condition, feeding and more. EFC's were allowed in before the pandemic and they should be allowed in again. Touch, talking and social connection are all crucial for both mental and physical health. The absence of the EFC during this long isolation has caused failure to thrive, depression, loneliness, feelings of abandonment, physical, emotional and mental decline. All nursing homes are understaffed and an EFC can help fill those gaps for the health and safety of the resident. The STATE of CT allows 1.9 hours of care for a patient within a 24 hr. period. **That is less than 5 minutes of care per hour. Please we cannot let this happen again!**

Allowing EC's in benefits everyone! We are unpaid help and will follow every safety precaution there is.

Isolating residents from their EC is not keeping them safe. On March 9, 2020 my husband weighed 176 lbs., was walking and talking. He now weighs 142 lbs, is a Hoier lift and barely talks. He needs to be drugged in order to stay calm. To know what this poor man has been through is inhumane to say the least! What we have allowed to happen as a society is despicable!

Are we REALLY keeping them safe when they are sitting in their rooms like prisoners, dying from broken hearts – failure to thrive?

I ask you all again to please consider an executive order in the next session to allow one Essential Caregiver per resident in a Long Term Care Facility so these residents never have to feel abandoned again.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sharon Echtman