

3/27/21

In support of SB 303

Mrs. Sherry Ann Hathaway
15920 E Stratford Row
Wichita, KS 67230
Senate District 30

Dear Chairman Hildebrand and Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee Members,

I am writing to implore you to send this bill for a vote to those who are elected to represent the thousands of Kansans who have been adversely affected for the past twelve months by government imposed isolation in nursing homes and hospitals, and their powerless family members.

I shared my own story in an editorial published by the Topeka Capital-Journal, then subsequently shared it on Facebook. I was astounded to see it go viral within four days, receiving more than 10,000 likes and over 25,000 shares. A petition I started received 11,000 signatures. My story resonated deeply with thousands of Kansans, and I received dozens of personal messages and emails from distraught, grieving families who have been harmed by misguided and detrimental government Covid policies. I also addressed the Sedgwick County Commission, appeared on a local TV news broadcast twice, and contacted various Kansas legislators - all to no avail. I had planned to lobby every single member of the Kansas legislature this session, but you locked me out of my capitol. We are a nation of laws, and we need a law to prevent these grievous violations of patient and family member rights **now**.

Thank you so much for your time, commitment, and sacrifice on all our behalf.

Sincerely,
Ann Hathaway

My op/ed to the Topeka Capital-Journal September 2020

My dad, a 97 year old machine gunner in WWII, recently had a medical emergency that required a trip to the hospital via EMS. He wears two hearing aids, relies heavily on me to communicate with medical personnel on his behalf, and I have Durable Power of Attorney.

At the ER I was told flatly, coldly that I could not see my dad, nor could I wait in the waiting room. If I wished to stay, I must wait in my car. My pleas to help my dad communicate his symptoms and pertinent medical history fell on deaf ears. There was an armed security guard standing by to escort me to my car should I refuse to leave. I waited in my car with no word for hours. I called four times asking for information, and was told I was tying up their line.

During his 48 hour stay, I was allowed to be with him for three hours. In those three hours I found my dad unwashed and having fallen trying to get to the bathroom. His blood and feces were on the floor. It was for these very reasons I had not left him alone overnight in a hospital for twenty years. My mom, who suffers from dementia, was frantic, confused, and alone at their assisted living facility, and I was not allowed in to comfort her, either.

These same harmful policies are in place at my parents' assisted living facility, where they have been in lockdown since March 4. They cannot come out, and no one can come in. They have been isolated from their family members, their pastor and friends, even their fellow residents, with no communal dining and no group activities. Not a single hug or kiss or touch of a hand, for over *five months*. This begs the question that medical, health, and geriatric professionals must ask, "Is it better to die from Covid-19, or from loneliness, despair, and depression?".

We, the family members and advocates for our hospitalized and confinees of nursing homes/assisted living residences say ENOUGH. The documented reality of husbands missing the births of their children, mothers giving birth alone, and tens of thousands of grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, husbands, and wives dying or suffering alone as their family members grieve and agonize, isolated from them, is unconscionable and malevolent. Hospital patients and elders have rights and individual liberties that are being egregiously violated and

callously ignored by health professionals. Any good physician will readily agree that a patient's best advocate is a close family member. Additionally, without family members present, monitoring conditions in nursing homes and hospitals, the most valuable source of accountability is removed.

If these oppressive and injurious policies, which are wholly arbitrary and enacted by unelected health officials, can only be changed by laws or "mandates", then we call upon city council members, county council members, and state legislators to act. We want these rights restored and respected. If masks work, put them to use for family members of hospital patients and nursing home residents. Mask up, gown up, glove up, and *let us in*. Anything less is simply inhumane.

Sincerely,

Ann Hathaway
Wichita, KS