HB 2536 Kansas Guardianship Program Requiring Dementia Training for Guardians

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I am testifying in favor of this bill. I am not a court-appointed guardian, nor have I worked with one. I have been a caregiver for a person with dementia. My husband was diagnosed with dementia, probably Alzheimer's, in the fall of 2019, although I had recognized many of the symptoms for at least 3 years prior to that.

When I saw what was happening, I reached out to the local Alzheimer's Association for help and education. In addition, I found a private group on Facebook for people who were taking care of a spouse with dementia. Between these two resources, I pieced together what I needed to do to advocate for my husband (and to take care of myself).

I also had the luxury of an understanding employer. I was still working full-time at this during his illness and as it progressed, I was able to use FMLA and take the time I needed to make sure he was cared for.

I was one of the lucky ones too in that due to my training as a lawyer who has worked most of my career in bank trust and wealth management departments, I knew how important it was to get our estate planning documents in order while Hank was still able to legally execute them. I also knew about spending down his assets so he could qualify for Medicaid (KanCare) when the time came.

I made the promise to myself that I would care for him as long as I could, and then I would make sure he was cared for. I enrolled him in the Midland PACE program here in Topeka in May of 2023. They helped with his care until he entered long-term care in September of 2024, where he passed in February 2025, four days short of his 73rd birthday.

My point is, that I entered this situation with some knowledge and had the ability to learn as I went and I had good support. Not all caregivers are so blessed. Not all adults with dementia have someone to listen to them and advocate for them. They need someone to be their ears and eyes. Regardless of how highly rated a care facility is, there are still times when someone needs to point out where additional or different care is needed. This is why training is so important, especially for those who are stepping in without a prior relationship with the patient.

Now that I know about this program and am retired from full-time work, I will see if I can be of help as a court-appointed guardian.

Thank you for your time and allowing my testimony.