

February 4, 2024

Senate Bill #352

Position: Proponent

Testimony type: Written Only

Submitted by: Connie J. Schmidt

Chairman/Chairwoman and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 352. My testimony is provided in memory of my husband of 48 years, Tom, who died in January 2022 following repeated hospital stays in December 2021 to early January 2022.

My husband suffered from Diabetes, Type 1, for over 75 years. Beginning in 2020, he started to experience kidney failure, which included the failure of his kidneys to produce a hormone that stimulates the body to produce red blood cells. After over 25 blood transfusions during 2020, it was finally determined that he must have iron infusions following by injections of the hormone in order for his body to make red blood cells. Low red blood cells caused his body to have trouble breathing with extreme loss of energy, etc. These facts are important to know because as we together battled these issues, I became his lifeline as it related to doctor visits, monitoring his blood counts online via the portal, and more than anything, being his advocate with both his specialist and the nurses at the Cancer Center where he received the iron infusions and hormone injections.

In early December 2021, following his COVID-19 booster shot, he immediately developed extreme health issues – fever, shivering, weakness, etc. We went to the emergency room, where they did a COVID test, and came back and told us he did in fact have COVID. We were shocked because he never left our home except for doctor visits. They told me I could not stay with him – I understood because he was going to a COVID floor for monitoring, etc. Within a week I was able to pick him up, get oxygen delivered to our home and get him scheduled for home health visits. Things were going along pretty well until about 10 days later when his oxygen levels were getting dangerously low again. Remember, he was in kidney failure with the other issue of kidneys not producing hormones to stimulate production of red blood cells. The home health nurses told us his contagious period for COVID was over and they assured both of us that I would be able to stay with him in the hospital. THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY HE WAS GOING TO AGREE TO GO BACK TO THE HOSPITAL. We called Med-Act and he was transported back to Olathe Medical Center ER. We were in the ER all day, and finally given a room. I walked with him on the transport gurney and the nurses up to the floor where he was being taken. He was much calmer, knowing that I was going to be able to stay with him this time. It also must be noted that I was his Power of Attorney for Medical Decisions, and I was truly his other “half”, physically, emotionally, and mentally. At this point in his life, he could not use his cell phone (a flip phone), he could not hear anything without his hearing aids, and he wore a continuous glucose monitor, with handheld device that sounded alarms when his blood sugar went too low or too high. Again, he was way past the contagious period for having COVID, and he was being admitted for the other issues regarding Diabetes Type 1 and kidney failure.

After arriving on the floor and going to the room, I was met by THREE ARMED SECURITY GUARDS WITH ARMS FOLDED IN FRONT OF THEM, barring me from the room, and instructed me to LEAVE the floor. I am forever haunted by the look on my husband’s face!! He was there again – and they were making me leave. He was horror stricken and I was in shock and angry. I went downstairs to the lobby to try to collect myself and to call

our doctor. Our doctor did everything that he could to get me in my husband's room. I told them that I would agree to wear a gown, gloves and mask and NEVER leave his room, if that is what it took to stay with him. My doctor was truly frustrated that to no avail he could not get permission for me to stay with him.

My husband went straight downhill during that last hospitalization. He was truly alone in every sense. I continued to monitor his blood work from home via the portal. On numerous occasions during that hospital stay, I called the nurses station to inform them that my husband's blood sugar was way over 400 – and – he was already in kidney failure!!!!!!! They refused to use his continuous glucose monitor and always told me about how busy they were at the nurses station. I understand busy – but this is my husband and he had multiple significant medical issues that I had been managing for him here at home.

When I finally got him out of there again, he was in far worse condition than when he was admitted. He never received an iron infusion or injection. Within a week after getting him home, we were finally able to get blood drawn through home health and his red blood count was dangerously low which was why he was requiring more and more oxygen. He came home from that last hospital visit with huge bed sores on his back side – from obvious lack of care. Home health, along with me, cared for those issues here at home.

My husband passed away within two weeks of getting him out of that hospital. I remain forever haunted by the three armed security guards and the way I was treated during an end-of-life period of time for my husband of 48 years. I regret ever letting them take him back to that hospital. I remain traumatized by this horrible experience and refuse to go to a hospital unless absolutely necessary. My faith and trust in the medical/hospital field has been forever damaged to my heart and soul.

I will end by just reinforcing that a major part of a patient's ability to handle illness or near death health experiences is to have their "person" sitting next to them. That reassurance and comfort should never, ever be denied – for the sake of the patient, and their family member.

Our doctor knew that Tom and I were just like ONE PERSON. Being lied to about being able to stay with my husband and being escorted out of his hospital room by three armed security guards is an experience I shall never recover from – and an experience that I hope no other loved ones have to endure.

Thank you for reading my testimony and for your support of SB 352.

Connie J. Schmidt

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