

To: **SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE**

**RE: In support of SB 303**

From: Helen Van Etten, Private citizen, Shawnee County, Senate District 19

Date: March 29, 2021

Chairman Richard Hilderbrand, Vice Chair Gossage, and distinguished members.

My name is Helen Van Etten. I am a retired Audiologist, living in Topeka Kansas.

I appreciate this opportunity to give you some feedback as you consider revising the Kansas a nursing home facility without any recourse or remedy during the Covid lockdown.

My husband Roger and I moved to Kansas in 1985 so that He could attend Washburn Law School. He then served as an attorney for the State of Kansas for nearly 20 years. Roger had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease for numerous years then suffered a mild stroke in late January of 2020 and was doing rehabilitation in the Select Specialty Hospital in Kansas City. He made good progress and we were able to move him to the Topeka Healthcare Resort in April 2020 to be closer to home. The COVID scare quickly shut down opportunities to visit my husband in this skilled nursing facility. I was not able to provide emotional support nor monitor his care. A feeding tube was soon needed, and bedsores became a problem. Roger's mental and physical condition deteriorated rapidly within 3 weeks. In desperation, I asked our family physician to move Roger to home hospice so that we could be together in what looked like his last years of life. He passed away in August 2020.

It appears that administrators in hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and nursing homes overreacted to the pandemic and quarantined all patients and residents. Unelected administrators overlooked the fact that healing is often dependent on encouragement and love of family. Facility staff were able to come and go but family were shut out. I was robbed the precious time to spend with him at his conscious moments.

I understand the Senator Bud Estes was not able have visits by his wife Renae during his last nearly two months of hospitalization. He may also have died from a broken heart!

Doesn't our constitution require a judge's order to incarcerate a person? Please consider adding a requirement that even during a pandemic, provision must be made for their spouses, parents, and children to visit a patient or nursing home resident and such visits would be on a daily basis if requested.

Thank you for receiving my testimony.