

Chairman Kohl and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify this morning. The place I had hoped one day to be , being able to share and have the opportunity to tell what happened to my beloved Grandmother and my family. Hoping that by having this chance to tell her story somehow will make a difference and help change the laws governing all facilities that take care of our elderly so something this horrifying doesn't happen to anyone else.

My name is Jennifer Coldren I live in Rome, NY in the vicinity of Syracuse. The nightmare for my family began last year when my Grandmother who was 90 years old at the time, who had never had one act of violence done against her, was raped and assaulted by an employee of the residential facility she was in. He was 45. The man had a criminal record and it was only the third time he had worked on the floor. He worked on the floor as needed, and his permanent job had been working on the surgical unit of the hospital. Had there been an effective background check performed he would not have had the opportunity to harm my Grandmother. Mr. Turtora's office prosecuted this criminal this Spring and this criminal received up to 30 years in prison for what he did to her. Her abuser showed no remorse for what he had done and the judge called him a sick man and said what he did was second to murder.

Before we lived this our family believed that with society the way it is today that safeguards were already in place to protect our elderly from abuse, unfortunately we had to learn a tragic lesson that they weren't.

I respectfully ask you to do something to prevent other similar crimes and further abuse of the elderly from happening in assisted care and medical facilities for we were outraged that policies and laws were not in place to prevent something like this from happening. In this situation a background check could take 30 to 120 days to come back, a lot of damage can be done in that time. My Grandmother's story is an example of what that time frame can do. This is what happened to my Grandmother.

First to give you an idea what this did to her family I would like to start by summing up our feelings into words what we felt living this nightmare. Disbelief, fear, numbness, pain, anger, bitterness, shock, outrage and our hearts broken. We also shed a thousand tears for her. But we also were proud, for my Grandmother was not only a victim but a hero. She prevented him from hurting her again, and from hurting anyone else on the floor that night. If she hadn't told anyone what happened, it makes us wonder how long the abuse would have gone on before he had been caught and stopped , and just how many more elderly people he would have harmed? See my Grandmother had dementia at the time and we knew just how lucky we were she got her story out, and terrified of what it could have been if she hadn't.

Before this took place my Grandmother had a smile for everyone. After this happened she no longer smiled , cried all the time and had told us numerous times she wanted nothing more but to be an angel and for God to take her. She kept her feelings bottled up inside, did not discuss what happened with us or psychiatrists. Through her depression her mind and body weakened and about five weeks after she had a stroke. She could no

longer put full sentences together anymore, and her words became mumbles. She had given up on life.

My family had made the decision to bring her home. See I couldn't live with myself leaving her there I didn't trust anyone for her care anymore and was scared that something else bad could happen to her. The day we took her out of the facility she smiled ear to ear the first time since this happened to her.

Our decision also came from when we found out that her abuser had also worked in another long term care facility and also in a state facility prior to this that works primarily with the elderly and severely handicapped people. He had also had numerous complaints of a sexual nature, inappropriate touching complaints, and they were all unfounded. He slipped through so many cracks. We felt we had no choice but to take her out of there.

My Grandmother has lived with me and my husband now for the past 5 months. It hasn't been an easy road for she has alzheimers dementia which presents new struggles and challenges every day but she is beginning to be happy again and for us our family we have peace of mind knowing she is safe and sound and happy. We made the right decision.

The way things are, this tragedy can happen again in any nursing home, hospital, home care setting, and anywhere our vulnerable elderly are being taken care of by someone hired to take care of them.

I ask the committee for a moment to put yourself in our shoes, how would you feel if this happened to your Mother, Grandmother or someone else you love? We need to protect our aging loved ones who can't protect themselves because if we don't who will? Someday we will be old too. For my family we will never forget what happened and I am reminded every time I look into my Grandmother's eyes what happened to her. I will never forget for the rest of my life.

Our hope is something good will come out of this nightmare for us and that together we can come up with a solution for a growing problem so that this never happens to another elderly person and their families again.

In closing, we can not change the past, or what happened to my Grandmother but we can change things for the future generations so no one will ever know the fear and pain my Grandmother and family has endured through all this. This is our hope to be a part of that by being here today.

Thank you for letting me speak and share her story today.