

May 12, 2014

Senator [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Senator [REDACTED]

You asked me to write about my experiences at [REDACTED] Nursing Home. It's impossible for me to tell you what it's really like there, but I can give you a general idea anyway. My object is not to close the facility, but to let you know about the problems there so that you can do something about it.

Let me start with what happens as soon as you get there on your first day. They take you to your room and have you leave all of your things in your room and then they take you to another place down the hall so they can get your vital signs and basic information. While they're doing that, other people are going through your personal things in your room to see what you have that's valuable, and if they see things they want, they take them. I can tell you specifically about when this happened and they took a personal recorder, for one example. Other examples are rings and clothes that are valuable.

So with me, I'm there for rehabilitation after having my leg amputated. But all they had for me to work with were elastic bands. The Physical Therapists at [REDACTED] were really good; they knew what they were doing. That's not the problem. The problem was that they didn't have any real Physical Therapy equipment to work with.

There aren't enough people all around at [REDACTED]. How can they expect five people in the kitchen to cook for eighty people in the whole nursing home? And they deserve more than the minimum wage.

The tables where people eat their meals don't get wiped clean, and the chairs, which are cloth, aren't kept clean. All kinds of things happened on those chairs and then people have to eat there. The staff isn't allowed to restrain people so they're supposed to watch the residents closely but they don't. I saw a lady fall three quarters of the way out of her chair and none of the staff went to help her because they were on their cigarette

break. She was just left there hanging off of her chair.

My roommate fell hard on the floor and it took four days just to get someone to even look him over after he fell like that.

One resident, Peter, a quadriplegic, developed a really serious infection because the staff didn't take care of his urine bag. That caused him so much pain on top of what he was already suffering and it was pain that he didn't have to have. Plus it could have cost him his life. I have pictures to show to prove what was going on with Peter.

A lot of times the staff there is good and caring, but when you have one nurse and one aide on the floor, they can't give good care. And people suffer as a result. It's a matter of treating people with dignity more than anything else. You have to give good medical care, but you also have to treat them like human beings and you have to be a decent human being yourself when you're working with them and remember that you're there to respect them no matter what.

Instead it's like it's just a money machine. Where does it stop? Does the owner have to have nine jets? There might be two electric beds in the whole place – all the rest are the old fashioned manual kind. So I couldn't keep my leg elevated the way I was told to by my surgeon at [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] didn't even give me pillows for that but [REDACTED] gave me three pillows to keep my leg elevated to prevent blood clots.

The doors don't even open electronically. With all the people who are there who are disabled in wheelchairs, how is that building compliant with the codes? Now the owner is filing for bankruptcy but he's still in business. Just go there and look at the people and what shape they're in. They can't complain though. Who's going to say anything to make it stop and make things better for the people that are stuck living there and the people that have to work there for minimum wage?

The housekeeping staff didn't even have detergent to wash the laundry in for a week at a time. So people have to have their clothes washed in with raw feces from people who are incontinent, which is something no one wants to have done, but on top of that, to have it put through without

detergent besides, it's not only totally disgusting but it's obviously a violation of every health law there is to put people's laundry through like that. All you're doing is contaminating everything. There are definitely people living there who have infections and doing this kind of thing is going to end up spreading these illnesses around to the rest of the residents.

They don't treat the biohazard waste material the way they're supposed to either, not to mention that people have to sit in their own feces and urine. There are all kinds of violations, including how the O2 tanks aren't taken care of right.

Besides the laundry, they don't even keep the bathrooms and showers clean. There's water leaking from the ceiling, the vents are black and the floor of the bathrooms covered with ants. I had to clean the shower myself before I would even think about taking a shower. It wasn't exactly an easy thing for me to do, with only one leg and this being right after my amputation so I was having to recuperate from the surgery, plus having to deal with all of the pain, and having to learn how to manage with just one leg.

I was there for basic rehab. I was there to learn how to do everything - how to get dressed and get around, to get from a wheelchair to the bed and from the wheelchair into the car and out of the car and back into the wheelchair and how to deal with stairs and elevators and how I would be able to maneuver around my kitchen and bathroom and around stores to get groceries for myself and all of these most basic things that I had to do just to go on living. But in the nursing home I wasn't supposed to be doing the work of the nursing home staff, especially when I first got there and I was still recovering from the actual amputation with all of the pain not to mention the risk of infection. That's where all of that lack of cleanliness at [REDACTED] put me in such a dangerous condition too, that it could have caused me to pick up one of the life-threatening infections like MERSA or C.diff that even people who haven't just had a leg amputated can get and some of them never can get rid of those infections. And some of them die from them.

So for me to have to do the work of the housekeeping staff and have to

clean the shower before I could use the shower, in my condition right after surgery, was medically risky to say the least.

The worst way that [REDACTED] is short-staffed is with their nursing and aide staff. That means that when you need something you have to wait, and that's especially bad when you need your pain medicine. All of the doctors tell you to take it on time because if you don't, then the pain will get ahead of you and you won't be able to keep the pain under control. But at [REDACTED], you can't keep on schedule with the pain medicine because they just don't give it to you on schedule. Then the pain is really bad, especially right after having an amputation, but for a long time after that too, with phantom pain, which doesn't stop, the pain is out of control.

Worse than that, a lot of the time they didn't even have the medication in the building. The whole month of February they got my medications all wrong. They were not in the building or in the computer system. There were huge discrepancies. So regardless of whether or not they would have given it to me on time, they didn't even have it to give it to me, period. There is no question that there was fraudulent billing going on with all of this too.

And it's not just medicine. There are other things they don't have. They don't have distilled water for the oxygen concentrators or an 88-cent bottle of water for the CPAP machine. They had to go to Wal-Mart to get that as well as cotton balls for my prosthesis. I kept juices on the windowsill because it was colder there than it was in the refrigerator. There was rotten food. I tried to tell the residents to hide cans of pop in the dresser drawers because the staff threw everything out and the people weren't getting enough to drink. The people with dementia are at risk for dehydration because they don't ask for anything to drink. The staff doesn't come around often enough with water or ice the way they're supposed to.

When they get good people to work there, they can't keep them because they are so overworked because the place is short staffed. The good people can't take it and so they leave. Then there are the people that they don't do any background checks on and they come to work high and they can't do their jobs that way. So the work doesn't get done.

The residents can't speak up. Everyone says to file a complaint. Who's going to do that? You know you have to worry about retribution. And when you do try to speak up, like I did, they tell you, you can't say anything and when you leave because your rehab is over they won't even let you come back to visit your friends there because they tell you they'll have you arrested. So now the people that I know there think I don't care about them. They feel like I've abandoned them. That's not it at all – it's just that I'm not even allowed to go back to visit them.

I had to leave exactly the day that my Medicare payments stopped. It didn't matter whether I needed more Physical Therapy or not. All that mattered was that Medicare wasn't going to pay one penny more, so they wanted me out of there right away.

When the health inspectors come, it doesn't count because it's all a facade. The home makes everything look the way they know it's supposed to look just while the inspectors are there and then when they leave everything goes back to the way it is the rest of the time and it's the residents who have to suffer.

You're a Senator. The rich people want you to just listen to them so they can keep getting away with what they want to do.

But I know you. And I know that you know how to listen to the real people that you represent.

Hey, I'm not even there anymore. But a whole lot of other people are stuck there. And they can't talk, so I'm trying to talk for them.

Please do something.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Rochester New York