

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB2027 “GUARDIANSHIP:
PROCEDURES FOR RESTRICTION OF COMMUNICATION
VISITATION OR INTERACTION” BEFORE THE VIRGINIA GENERAL
ASSEMBLY SUBCOMMITTEE (JANUARY 23, 2023)**

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee, I am Mike Jacobs from Alexandria. I am not able to attend in person this year due to my recent cancer diagnosis and the death of my mother. This is the fifth consecutive year that I have made a statement regarding this bill. Again, for the fifth straight year, I want to thank the Virginia delegate for her sponsorship and championing this important legislation.

This bill is designed to right a terrible injustice that limits the ability of guardians to overstep their boundaries. There are nearly 11,000 Virginians under guardianships and an unknown number of people who are isolated. Many friends and loved ones are punished due to the actions of some guardians for no other reason than that they have the power to control the life of the ward.

There are many people who have suffered more than I have, but I can at least attest to the pain of someone whose last cognitive years have been taken away. This bill will give the courts more latitude for visitation with an incapacitated person who is being isolated from a loved one or someone in a long-standing relationship. Most people will never experience what I’ve endured.

I was in a relationship with Jane K. Lopez for 17 years. It is terrible enough to lose someone to this debilitating disease of Alzheimer’s. However, Jane and I lost two years of our lives by not being able to see each other due to the arbitrary decision of the guardian. I was only allowed to see her twice in the past before she passed in July 2020, once she was institutionalized in June 2017.

Jane did not recognize me after not seeing me for so long.

She went into the facility and never knew what happened to me. She faced that alone and my being denied access to her likely exacerbated her condition. Even her immediate family was denied access for several months.

Nothing in this bill can change anything for many who have already lost their loved ones, but it is not too late for those who face a similar challenge in the future.

People like Jane have nowhere to go for help. Were it not for my speaking up, she would simply fall through the cracks and no one would know the agony she endured from being isolated at the time when she needed support and the presence of those who love her most.

Isolation of any individual is not healthy, and I hope that this bill will provide the opportunity for people to be able to finally see a loved one. I only ask for your compassion as you make this decision and advance the bill out of committee

Thank you for your time today.

Mike Jacobs

2151 Jamieson Avenue, #707

Alexandria, VA 22314-5723

Phone: (202) 716-9268 (mobile)

