

Mrs. Nola Galloway  
631 Bickle Drive,  
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May 17, 2018

The Honourable Adrian Dix, MLA  
Minister for Health  
Government of British Columbia  
Room 337 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Dix,

I write to you today on behalf of our Family Council, to show our support for the *"Proposal of Change Supporting Residents in Care"* requested by Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils (VIAFC).

Our family council is a part of Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils (VIAFC) which is comprised of individual family councils from residential care facilities located within the Island Health Region. Our council has great respect for this association and for its Chairperson, Kim Slater who has given so much of his time to promote the invaluable role of Family Councils and to provide guidance in forming councils, as he did with ours. VIAFC provides our council the opportunity to meet with other members of individual councils to share experiences, ideas, suggestions and identify areas of mutual concern within the residential care system. Together we determine and address ways to enhance the quality of life of all residents living in residential care facilities in the Island Health Region.

Many family and friends of the residents worked to create our own family council. We are self-led, self determining and democratic as per Ministry of Health council guidelines. Together we try to advocate for quality care for our loved ones and for all the residents in the facility. We look for avenues to improve residents' quality of life. The residential care system can be complicated, and we strive to learn more about it to enable us to become effective advocates and communicators.

Unfortunately, our council has faced repeated roadblocks. The first obstruction came directly from the CEO of the family-owned facility who didn't agree with the operation of our council as determined by our members following Ministry of Health guidelines, so he simply set their own policy for what our involvement could be within the facility premises. In fact, the CEO would not permit us to meet on site if we insisted on the self-determining democratic model. Our membership (originally 15-20 members) tried to operate off-site. In short order, when we tried to offer suggestions for improvement, the CEO removed mention of our council from the "Resident and Family Handbook" and refused to advertise our meetings. He converted a monthly information meeting for residents and families into a "Resident and Family Council" run by the facility and referred new family members to ONLY their council. He refused to recognize us as a collective voice representing our loved ones in care.

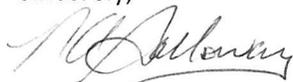
Can you imagine our reaction a few years later when our Health Authority concurred that the actual concern our council had brought forward was in fact valid: that residents had not been receiving the direct care hours to which they were entitled. On October 2014, the Health Authority moved to rectify the situation. But that was four years later, while the voice of family and friends had been marginalized, facility management set the agenda for their own meetings, and residents lost out on thousands of hours of direct care nursing.

Months later the facility would be bought by a large corporation. For several years we experienced more independence and more opportunity to be involved in discussions surrounding quality of care. We were optimistic that our voice finally mattered. However to our surprise just a few months ago we see the management-run "Resident Council" name has been changed to "Resident and Family Council" even though it continues to be run by the facility and even though there is already a long time established Family Council that was formed as per Ministry of Health guidelines . And in the subsequent months, our role appears to be diminished yet again—at the expense of residents in care.

Family councils are very important for quality of care for residents, but without regulations to guarantee their voice, they are easily silenced, as evidenced by our own experience.

Thank you for your consideration of implementing regulatory language that will equip Family Councils with the tools they need to advocate for those in care, as in the *"Proposal of Change Supporting Residents in Care"* requested by Vancouver Island Association of Family Councils (VIAFC).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Nola Galloway', written in black ink.

Nola Galloway