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Governor DeSantis Signs Senator Ileana Garcia's Legislation to Defend Patient Visitation Rights

The “No Patient Left Alone Act” protects patient visitation rights and guarantees patients can be supported by their loved ones in critical times.

Miami —

Senator Ileana Garcia (R-Miami), Chair of the Senate Committee on Children, Families and Elder Affairs, today joined Governor Ron DeSantis as he signed Senate Bill 988, In-person Visitation, by Senator Garcia, into law. To ensure patients have the support of their loved ones when they need it most, the legislation requires intermediate care facilities for the developmentally disabled, developmental disability centers, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, hospice facilities, and hospitals to allow visitation during end-of-life situations, times of loss and grieving, when a patient has been separated from the family they live with, when a patient needs support from their family member or caregiver to eat or drink, when a patient is in emotional distress, during labor and delivery, and when a pediatric patient receives care.

“No Floridian should have to suffer and die alone in a hospital. We must do everything in our capacity to provide families the opportunity to care for and support their loved ones during their most difficult times, and most importantly loved ones should be given the chance to say goodbye,” said Senator Garcia. “We have seen how patients and their families suffer from isolation during COVID-19, with many Floridians missing those final crucial moments with their loved ones, and we must never allow them to experience that mistake again.”

Senate Bill 988 creates the No Patient Left Alone Act and requires health care providers to establish visitation policies and procedures that authorize for visitation to the greatest extent possible if there are any health or safety concerns. The legislation also allows patients, residents and clients to designate an essential caregiver who must be allowed to visit two additional hours daily in addition to other visitation requirements. The legislation also requires the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to publicize information on visitation rights on their website, and to provide a portal for individuals to report violations.

Many Floridians lost the crucial last moments with their loved ones during COVID due to restrictive patient visitation policies. Additionally, separation and isolation of patients, especially seniors, has contributed to long-term health decline and mental health issues. SB 988 ensures Floridians are provided the opportunity to care for and visit with their loved ones in health care facilities.