

Good Day- Last year around Thanksgiving my mother, Nancy Uden, was involved in a car accident. When my stepfather and I went to pick up her car keys from the Hamel police station the responding officer informed us that my mother had been taken by ambulance to North Memorial Hospital because she had a seizure in her car as Emergency Service were arriving on scene. Obviously concerned we rushed to the hospital where my mother had experienced another grand mal seizure on the MRI table as they were imaging her head. She was very afraid, confused, agitated and panicky by the time the family was all gathered around her bedside in the emergency department. It was absolutely heart-wrenching and terrifying to see the matriarch and rock of our family in that condition. She was admitted for further testing by neurology. The MRI confirmed that there was a mass in her brain, likely the culprit of the seizures and, consequently, the car accident. After 2 different neurologists mistakenly diagnosed it as a benign mass that might need follow up at some point down the line, she wisely sought a 3rd opinion at Mayo Clinic. There we found out together, as a family, in a tiny clinical room that my mother had glioblastoma- one of the most insidious and lethal forms of brain cancer. This tumor had grown by 50% since her initial MRI just a few weeks prior. If we had taken the first or even second opinion about this tumor and decided to "wait and see what happens" with it, my mom would have had no chance for treatment and would have probably needed hospice instead of surgery. Blessedly, the neurosurgeon was able to get the bulk of the tumor removed. These tumors aren't smooth round masses as one might expect, but instead have cobweb-like tendrils wind and that twist into the brain tissue and invade surrounding parts of the brain making them almost impossible to remove completely. The neurosurgeon explained that when my mother awoke from surgery that she could be paralyzed on her left side, may lose peripheral vision, may no longer be able to read or play music, or she could bleed out and die. Thankfully, my mom is a Bad Ass and none of that happened. The last year has been a whirlwind of radiation, chemotherapy, doctor's appointments, visits to Mayo for Mom and prayers, hope, love, grief and terror for our entire family. My mom lives with the specter of Terminal Brain Cancer haunting the corners of her life and we live with the fear of living without her. While the tumor and treatments are hers alone, the trauma haunts us all. Mom is now epileptic. Over the week of Christmas she was hospitalized at Methodist with cluster seizures. She lost vision, hallucinated, repeated the same sentences incessantly, was convinced she was dying and was in a state of fear, confusion, and panic. We weren't sure if she would be coming home. This is my mother's reality now, trying to control seizures and manage the side effects of the seizure meds. Each time she has these seizures, we don't know if we will get our mother back. It takes days for her to get back on her feet after these events. It's like going 5 rounds with Mike Tyson. The goal posts are moved each time and we adapt to the new normal as best we can. Each time, it takes a bit more out of her and out of us. The future of someone living with glioblastoma is grim. It's a terminal cancer. It can be treated but never cured and the seizures are the new enemy. Many people with this disease end up in a coma, or wracked with seizures, blind, deaf, paralyzed, in horrible pain, unable to remember their loved ones, fearful, incontinent, combative, or left in a vegetative state before they die. THIS WILL NOT BE MY MOTHER'S FUTURE IF WE HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT. All we ask is that peaceful and compassionate death be a legal, safe choice that can be accessed by the terminally ill with less than 6 months to live, with physician's approval. We are not advocating for assisted suicide for everyone. That is not what this bill is about. It's about access to humane hospice for the terminally ill instead of a terrible, lingering decline and traumatic death. We do this for our pets, why not for our loved ones? My mother doesn't want that for herself or for us. And we don't want that for her or for ourselves. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kindly- Wendy Parsons