

Testimony Regarding My Husband's Hospitalization During COVID-19

My name is LaDonna Horner, and I am writing to share my family's experience during the COVID-19 pandemic in hopes that it will help ensure other families never have to endure what we did.

On August 2, 2021, my husband, Bill Horner, and I both tested positive for COVID-19. Bill was 60 years old, a healthy man with no underlying medical conditions, and he was not vaccinated against COVID-19. By August 8, his condition had progressively worsened. At the time, I believed he was severely dehydrated and simply needed fluids. When emergency medical services arrived at our home, his oxygen level was 87%, and he was transported to the hospital.

When I said goodbye as the ambulance drove away, I truly believed he would receive fluids, be treated, and return home within a few hours. I never imagined it would be the last time I would see him awake.

After arriving at the hospital, Bill remained in the emergency room for many hours before being admitted to a regular hospital room. Because I also had COVID-19, I was not allowed to be with him. Our daughter was permitted to visit him for only 30 minutes each day, and our other daughter, who also desperately wanted to see her father, was not allowed to visit at all. We were told that only one designated family member could visit during his hospitalization.

During his stay, we were informed that the hospital would be administering the medications required under the COVID-19 treatment protocols that were in place at that time.

On Tuesday, August 10, while our daughter was visiting Bill, we were told that his condition had worsened and that he would need to be placed on a ventilator. That evening, he was intubated. We were heartbroken, but we trusted that everything possible was being done to help him recover.

On the morning of August 13, we received a phone call that Bill's condition had deteriorated significantly. We were told that his blood pressure was dropping and that his organs were beginning to shut down. We were instructed to come to the hospital immediately.

When we arrived, we were finally allowed into the COVID unit. We were taken into a room to speak with the physician. Before the doctor finished speaking with us, the hospital chaplain entered the room and informed us that Bill's heart had stopped. We were told that CPR had been performed, but despite their efforts, they were unable to revive him.

The entire experience was devastating and deeply traumatic. I was never given the opportunity to say goodbye to my husband while he was conscious. The last words I spoke to him were when he left our home in the ambulance. I believed I would be bringing him home later that day. Instead, just five days after he was admitted to the hospital, I lost the man I had shared my life with for 39 years.

No family should have to experience the pain of being separated from a loved one during the most critical moments of their life. The visitation restrictions meant that Bill spent most of his hospitalization without the comfort and support of those who loved him most. Our family was left with lasting grief and unanswered questions that continue to this day.

I respectfully ask that you carefully review the hospital policies and COVID-19 treatment protocols that were implemented during the pandemic. My hope is not only to honor Bill's memory but also to help ensure greater transparency, compassionate family involvement, and accountability so that other families do not have to endure the same heartbreaking experience.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and for your willingness to listen to the voices of families whose lives were forever changed.

Respectfully submitted,

LaDonna Horner

Widow of Bill Horner

Clermont, Florida