

My name is Shannon Ford, and I am submitting this testimony regarding the hospitalization and death of my dad, Thomas Ford, at Ascension St. Vincent Carmel Hospital on January 1, 2022.

Between December 22, 2021, and January 4, 2022, my family experienced thirteen days that changed our lives forever. My dad was hospitalized with COVID-19 pneumonia and died. My mom was hospitalized with COVID-19 in the same hospital. Nearly everyone in our immediate family was sick, quarantined, hospitalized, or recovering.

What I remember most from those thirteen days is not the illness itself. It was the isolation.

We took my dad to the hospital on December 22 after his oxygen saturation dropped to approximately 70%. He was admitted alone. No family member was allowed to accompany him. While he was fighting for his life, our family was fighting to have a voice in his care.

My sister is a physician assistant, and our family spent hours speaking with medical staff, researching treatment options, and asking questions. We asked whether alternative approaches might be considered but were told the hospital's protocol was fixed. We were not asking for guarantees or miracles. We wanted an open conversation about our dad's care and to understand why certain options were or were not being considered. Instead, we often felt our concerns were dismissed rather than discussed.

On Christmas Day, my mom was admitted to the same hospital with COVID-19. Shortly after arriving, she met with an emergency room physician and was told she was unlikely to survive and should get her affairs in order.

She had walked into the hospital under her own power. She was alert, communicating clearly, and participating in her care. The impact of that conversation was immediate. Mom believed she was dying.

While sitting with my dad upstairs, I received a text message from her that simply said, "I'm not going to make it."

In that moment, we believed we could lose both of our parents.

My parents had been married for more than fifty years. They were hospitalized in rooms next to one another, separated by only a wall, yet they were not allowed to be together. For seven days, my mom asked to visit him. Day after day, the answer was no.

On January 1, a nurse finally wheeled my mom to the ICU to see my dad. It was their only visit. Neither knew it would be their last.

Back in her room shortly afterward, Mom heard a Code Blue announced overhead and recognized the room number. Her nurse wheeled her downstairs, where she watched doctors and nurses attempt to resuscitate him for more than 30 minutes. My sister and I arrived as those efforts were ending. Dad was pronounced dead at 3:48 p.m.

Mom remained hospitalized with COVID. In the hours following Dad's death, my sister reached out to medical contacts and searched for additional treatments, ultimately traveling out of state to obtain ivermectin for my mother.

Whether others agree with that decision is not the point. What matters is that our family felt compelled to search for answers on our own because we no longer felt heard.

Three days later, my mom was discharged. She survived COVID. The husband she had spent a lifetime loving did not.

I share this testimony because our experience was about more than a virus. It was about isolation and separation. It was about being unable to advocate for a loved one in person and feeling that family voices no longer mattered in decisions involving the people they loved most.

The policies of that time did not only affect medical care. They affected marriages, families, final conversations, final visits, and final goodbyes.

Our family can never recover the moments that were lost. My hope is that by sharing our story, the human cost of those policies will not be forgotten.