

April 23, 2009

The Honorable Senator Barbara Mikulski

United States Senator

Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski,

I am writing to you on behalf of my father, Jack Pavony of Rockville, Maryland, We were so stirred by your words at the Yom Hashoah Commemoration at Beth Shalom this Sunday and so moved by meeting you that day that we were inspired to contact you directly about his current plight. We are turning to you to ask for your help in gaining him a Medicaid waiver so that he can have the assistance he needs for kidney dialysis and Parkinson's disease to remain in the community – not be sent to a nursing home – a far more expensive and disastrous solution.

As we mentioned that day, my father is a three and a half year survivor of Auschwitz – the number on his arm is one of the lowest numbers you will ever see, and as a 15-year-old boy sent to that extermination camp in 1942 with his parents, he somehow survived – albeit alone in the world. He is Polish as you are and he took us on a trip similar to the one you described – to find our roots in Poland – we stood in front of the same bins at Auschwitz that you so eloquently detailed and the feelings were mutual – although the memories they brought to him are nightmares he lives with every day.

He has been a hard worker creating his own business, a patriotic American citizen and taxpayer, a loving father, husband and now grandfather and great grandfather. We are all thankful for these blessings. His wife, my mother and a survivor of Auschwitz from Warsaw, died at age 32 of Hotchkins disease. The tragedies for our family did not end in 1945. Now at age 83, and with savings he thought would last a lifetime, my father is facing destitution and an unwarranted life in a nursing home which for him will feel like he is back in Auschwitz – an institution with uniformed strangers, a loss of control, the loss of home, friends, his identity. He requires full time care because of a fall risk due to Parkinson's disease, congestive heart failure and kidney failure that has him depending for his life on dialysis three times a week. The costs have ruined him financially – but he has maintained a true quality of life despite his disabilities.

He is a true survivor – in every sense of the word – he continues to live a meaningful life in his one bedroom apartment at the Revitz House – with full time assistance. He reads the Washington Post and New York Times every day, has dinner with his friends when he has the strength – they are survivors, too, and they give each other strength. He sees his family often, reads a great deal about WW II and history, listens to music, meets with the Holocaust Survivor Group and attends events like the one you participated in on Sunday. He has spoken to young people in schools to share his story and to teach the lessons of the Holocaust. He has inspired me to be on the Board of Directors of the Washington area Generation After and co-founder of the Generations of the Shoah International to keep the legacy of our parents alive and educate the world about the menace of genocide and intolerance. My brother and I translated and printed the memoirs my father dictated of his war years as another attempt to share this horrific past and learn from it. Many friends and

family have a copy and read from it yearly during the Passover Seder about slavery and freedom.

As we explore every avenue to keep my father in his home and as his assets dwindle even with our assistance, we have turned to every agency in the community for assistance. He moved to Maryland to be with us 2 1/2 years ago and we registered him for the Maryland Medicaid waiver about a year later. He is number 9730 on that list and they tell us there is no way to know how long that will take – but it appears it will be at least 3 years. Receiving support for home assistance that would keep him from a nursing home is the most economical and humane solution to his plight. He cannot wait 3 years for this opportunity given his financial and medical situations. Even living in a HUD subsidized apartment, his expenses for rent and full time aide are \$7,834 a month and his income from social security and German reparations are \$1,753 a month. Even with the family paying for transportation, food, clothing, health insurance and all other expenses, you can see that we cannot sustain him in his home or ours.

We are turning to you as our Senator, as a social worker, and as a compassionate public official who has roots and understanding of the world my father came from and is currently living in – to ask for your assistance in providing my father a solution to this crisis. If he could receive the Medicaid waiver and financial support to stay at Revitz House with fulltime assistance it would literally save his life. We are more than willing to have him live at our home as well, but the assistance is needed because of severe danger of falling and all of the care he needs with the dialysis.

We would be willing to do whatever is necessary to find a solution to avert a final tragedy in the life of our father – who has had to bear so many traumas and losses. At age 19, after the Death March, and after our father was liberated from the camps, he joined an American Army camp as a worker to “give back” and as a true gesture of thanks, attempted to join the American Army and fight in Japan. He received a letter from President Truman thanking him for his courage but telling him he had suffered enough in his young life and encouraging him to pick up the pieces and create a productive life. He followed President Truman’s words all of his life and succeeded. Please assist us in finding an honorable and just solution to this last chapter in his life. – one that will save the State countless thousands of dollars and maintain dignity and meaning.

We are grateful for any assistance and guidance you can offer and can be contacted at 240-396-6467 or at Revitz House 6111 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD 20832.

Sincerely,

Jack Pavony and Annette Bar-Cohen