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LETTERS

We're failing the most vulnerable when we scrimp on guardianship

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Re [“‘Stuck’ patients strain hospitals: Guardians to make decisions in short](#)

[supply](#)” by Kay Lazar (Page A1, Jan. 28): Massachusetts is one of only 14 states without a state-organized public guardianship service. While many states provide the services through a state agency, some contract with one or more nonprofit organizations. In a few states, the services are provided through a well-managed and supported volunteer program.

Service as a guardian is not a casual undertaking. It is a court-sanctioned obligation that can last for many years. The expectation that many unrelated individuals would readily assume the responsibility for strangers is not realistic. The resources and oversight of qualified organizations are needed to recruit, train, support, and supervise guardians whether they are paid staff or volunteers. To do otherwise is poor public policy and a failure of society to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

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