



Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO
THE SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES, AND MEDICAID COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 24

Larke Recchie, CEO

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony about Senate Bill 24.

The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging is a nonprofit, statewide network of agencies that provide services for older Ohioans, people with disabilities and their families. The Association engages in national and statewide advocacy to address issues which have an impact on the aging and disability network and older Ohioans and people with disabilities, provides services to members, and serves as a collective voice for Ohio's 12 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).

Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging are part of a national network of over 600 on-the-ground organizations in each state, mandated by the Older Americans Act, and charged with helping Americans thrive in our homes and communities as we age. We are mission-driven primarily not-for-profit organizations that operate a complex service delivery system that provides access to community-based, in-home and elder rights services to 300,000 older Ohioans and people with disabilities.

In Ohio, 220,000 people are living with Alzheimer's disease right now, and 8000 of them are under the age of 65. Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging in partnership with other state and local organizations, provide an array of services to connect individuals and caregivers faced with Alzheimer's and dementia-related diseases to supports including caregiver support programs, case management, respite and other critical supports. Area Agencies on Aging are also participating in the promotion of Dementia-Friendly communities and training across the state.

Alzheimer's disease is not an "aging" disease. In fact, changes to the brain begin up to twenty years prior to symptoms. This is a public health issue, and we need a comprehensive state strategy to address it.

The Association supports Senate Bill 24 and the creation of an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Task Force to research all aspects of Alzheimer's and dementia-related diseases and the impact on individuals, families and our communities, and to make recommendations that the state should consider to better educate our citizens, improve care and support caregivers.

We also appreciate the amendment that includes a representative from the Association to be included on the Task Force. Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging ensure that communities' local needs and preferences are taken into consideration and that the resulting local delivery system is tailored to our communities. We work with public and private partners to provide the right supports to promote independence and healthy aging. We manage over 4100 contracts with our local partners to deliver direct services, such as meals, transportation, personal care, and home modifications in all regions of the state. We have been the champions of promoting and expanding the use of home and community-based services for over 40 years, saving the state an estimated \$12 billion.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate with other state agencies, advocates, providers, and other stakeholders in establishing a plan that we hope will have a substantial, lasting impact for our state.

Thank you.