



250 East Broad Street, Suite 220  
Columbus, OH 43215  
(614) 481-3511  
www.ohioaging.org

Kelsey Bergfeld, Chief Policy Officer  
bergfeld@ohioaging.org

## **TESTIMONY TO OHIO HOUSE WORKFORCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE HOUSE BILL 530**

Kelsey Bergfeld, Chief Policy Officer, [bergfeld@ohioaging.org](mailto:bergfeld@ohioaging.org)  
Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a)  
March 3, 2026

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a) in support of House Bill 530, which would establish the Long-Term Care Workforce Study Commission.

The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging represents the state's twelve Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), which coordinate and deliver vital services that help older Ohioans remain safe, healthy, and independent in their homes and communities. We work with direct care providers every day to help ensure our consumers receive the care and supports they need.

Ohio has a strong and coordinated aging and disability network, but it depends on a stable, well-trained, and adequately compensated long-term care workforce to function effectively. Home health aides, personal care aides, direct support professionals, and community health workers are the backbone of home and community-based services. They help older adults with bathing, dressing, medication reminders, meal preparation, transportation, and other daily activities that make independent living possible. They are often the first to notice changes in a person's health condition. Their support reduces hospitalizations, delays or prevents nursing facility placement, and provides critical peace of mind to family caregivers.

Despite their essential role, the long-term care workforce faces significant and well-documented challenges:

- Low wages relative to the physical and emotional demands of the work
- Limited access to affordable health coverage and benefits
- Inconsistent training standards and limited career pathways
- High turnover driven by burnout and financial instability
- Competition from other industries offering higher pay for less demanding work

These pressures threaten the sustainability of the entire aging and disability network. Without a sufficient workforce, even the best-designed programs cannot operate as intended. Medicaid waiver services, locally funded home care programs, and supports authorized under the Older Americans Act all depend on the availability of qualified direct care professionals.

Ohio's AAAs saw firsthand how increased provider reimbursement rates in the last biennial budget strengthened the workforce. Higher rates led to increased wages and benefits for direct care workers, improved hiring and retention, reduced waitlists, and more consumers receiving the services they need. That progress demonstrates what is possible when workforce stability is prioritized. However, sustaining that progress will require ongoing review of reimbursement rates and workforce conditions. Without regular evaluation and adjustment, progress can quickly decline.

Establishing a Long-Term Care Workforce Study Commission is a practical and necessary next step. While no single commission will solve these challenges overnight, it will create a structured, data-driven framework for action. By bringing together stakeholders, workforce experts, providers, and policymakers, the commission can develop realistic, bipartisan recommendations that strengthen the workforce and protect older adults' and individuals with disabilities' ability to remain safely at home.

The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging urges your support for House Bill 530. A sustainable direct care workforce is not optional—it is fundamental to ensuring that Ohioans can continue to choose how and where they live as they age.