



**Ohio House Aging and Long Term Care Committee
Proponent Testimony on SB 24**

Susan Wallace, Director of Government Relations and Public Affairs, LeadingAge Ohio
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Good morning Chairman Arndt, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Howse and members of the Aging and Long Term Care Committee. I appreciate today's opportunity to share our thoughts on SB 24, which would create an Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Task Force that would be charged with developing a state plan for dementia.

LeadingAge Ohio is an association representing mission-driven, values-based providers of long-term services and supports to older Ohioans. Our 400-plus members are life plan communities (CCRCs), affordable housing providers, skilled nursing facilities, adult day programs, assisted living, county homes, home health agencies and hospices, among others. Together, LeadingAge Ohio members serve an estimated 400,000 Ohioans annually and employ approximately 35,000 Ohioans statewide.

You have already heard the daunting statistics related to coming trends for Ohio: 220,000 Ohioans are currently living with the disease, each of whom relies on a team of caregivers to support them, widening the impact. Those numbers are expected to grow precipitously over the coming decades, and we are woefully unprepared.

In the last General Assembly, we tackled this issue from several directions: the former Speaker established a legislative Task Force on the issue, which discussed the state's preparation for the coming challenges at length and made recommendations around provider training on dementia care. Another work group discussed standards that could be established for dementia care units and programs housed within long-term care facilities and assisted living. Still another task force examined the efficacy of Ohio's assisted living waiver, touching on opportunities related to building the program to meet the needs of individuals with cognitive impairment. Each group tackled the topic with candor and a sense of purpose, but the conversation was piecemeal by design, and we have not yet seen the fruits of those labors.

While all of our members care for individuals with dementia at their various stages of illness, a handful of our members are going beyond their walls and service lines to elevate this issue at the local level. In northeast Ohio, a "Dementia Collective" has formed which seeks to foster a "hub" model for caregiver support and community education, choosing neutral spaces like libraries and other community centers for individuals with dementia and their families to congregate. In the opposite corner of the state, Episcopal Retirement Services has set a bold goal to make Cincinnati a "Dementia-inclusive" community.

They've been fostering partnerships with public services to offer training, and recently have begun training the staff of banks, restaurants, libraries and other businesses frequented by older adults, both to assist in detection of dementia, prevent abuse, and reduce stigma and social isolation both for individuals with dementia and their caregivers.



We are supportive of SB 24 not solely because it tackles the important challenges before us, but because it does so in a comprehensive fashion. The bill requires the Task Force to make recommendations on state policies, provider capacity and training, quality measurement, identification and surveillance of dementia, public awareness strategies, and caregiver supports, among others. The scope of the Task Force is sweeping, while the timeframe is curtailed, with the group dissolving 18 months after its formation, following the completion of the report.

LeadingAge Ohio is supportive of consolidating and building upon the work done in the previous General Assembly by establishing the Alzheimer's and Related Dementias Task Force, to ensure that Ohio is a great place to age.