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**Written Testimony on Senate Bill 24
House Aging and Long Term Care Committee
May 23, 2019
Jason C. Smith, AARP Ohio**

Dear Chairman Arndt, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Howse, and members of the Committee,

My name is Jason Smith and I serve as the Associate State Director of Advocacy for AARP OH. AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with an age 50+ membership of nearly 37 million nationwide, and approximately 1.5 million members here in Ohio. AARP fights for issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, family caregiving and independent living and believes no one's possibilities should ever be limited by their age and seeks to find new solutions so that more people can live and age as they choose.

I am here today to offer AARP's support for SB 24. For many years, AARP has been supportive of the establishment of task forces focused on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias around the country. These task forces have been tremendously beneficial to both policymakers and stakeholders by providing insight into the current services and resources for persons living with dementia and their caregivers, as well as helping states to plan for the future.

According to current estimates, more than five million people in the United States live with Alzheimer's disease, the most common type of dementia. Under the current trajectory, more than 13.8 million additional baby boomers are expected to develop dementia by 2050. This number is staggering, but AARP does not see it as a certainty. We believe that it is possible to disrupt dementia – to spark new solutions in the treatment and care for persons with dementia.

Recently, AARP announced a significant investment in the Dementia Discovery Fund, which invests in research and development of breakthrough treatments for dementia. We hope that these funds can help accelerate treatment of the disease and fund research toward new therapies.

Behind our commitment is the knowledge that effects of dementia are not isolated to the individual living with the disease. Family caregivers also face challenges. A 2017 AARP poll on dementia care took a look at the experiences of family caregivers for those with dementia and found more than half said their social life suffered and nearly 45 percent

Real Possibilities

said they feel alone. In the act of caring for others, family caregivers are developing their own health problems and, in some cases, going without care. And in so doing, they are becoming less able to serve as caregivers.

Here in Ohio we need a plan. Not only does dementia take an emotional and physical toll, but it also takes a financial one. Family caregivers for adults with dementia reported nearly twice the out-of-pocket costs (\$10,697) than those caring for adults without dementia (\$5,758). They are hemorrhaging money, as is the state. Many of the hundreds of thousands of individuals in Ohio living with Alzheimer's and other dementias are forced to spend down their assets in order to utilize long term care services under Medicaid. Ohio needs a plan to disrupt the current system and find ways to change the way this state supports individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. The bill before us today gets us started on that plan.

AARP asks for your support of SB 24. Thank you for your continued leadership as the bill moves forward.

Sincerely,

Jason C. Smith
AARP Ohio, Associate State Director, Advocacy