



Testimony on HB 265
House Aging & Long-term Care Committee
February 13, 2020

LeadingAge Ohio is pleased to offer comments on HB 265, which would create a voluntary dementia certificate that would be recognized by the state of Ohio. LeadingAge Ohio is an association of over 400 members who offer supports and services across the aging continuum. Our members include affordable and market rate senior living developers and operators, life plan communities, nursing homes, assisted living communities, home health agencies, hospices and other home- and community-based providers like adult day health and home-delivered meal providers.

LeadingAge Ohio has been involved in the conversation around this bill since its inception, when this topic was discussed as part of the Speaker's Task Force on Alzheimer's and Dementia, which convened during the 132nd General Assembly. This bill is one of two legislative products of the Task Force's conversations, and the version before you today is an improvement upon earlier versions of the bill. We are pleased to see Rep. Howse assume leadership with the bill to continue this important work. We also agree with her previous statements related to the timeline of this bill: while we do have a statewide Alzheimer's and Dementia Plan on the horizon to be crafted over the coming 18-24 months by a Task Force set forth in SB 24, there are some changes—like those contained in this bill—that could be advanced in the meantime.

Our members believe that the bill has a seed of promise, and that standardizing education and training around this very important topic is a noble pursuit. The population of older Ohioans living with dementia is set to grow substantially in coming years, ballooning a population that already approaches a quarter-million, with over 600,000 caregivers contributing over 684 million hours of unpaid care.

LeadingAge Ohio agrees that we should ensure that our professional caregivers are trained to meet the needs of those that they serve, and while requirements for this type of training already exist in nursing facilities and residential care facilities (assisted living), the bill would advance a universal approach that could be included in any care model, whether current or future. Furthermore, our partnerships with Ohio's career centers, high schools and community colleges have taught us the value of recognized credentials in preparing today's graduates for the professions of tomorrow. We believe that a standardized dementia certificate could easily be paired with other existing curriculum to help students meet their graduation requirements and be ready for a career in the aging services sector from the moment they graduate.

However, in its current version, the bill falls short of the goal. We outlined our specific questions related to the bill in a document which we shared with the original sponsor, and



we've included them as an attachment to this testimony, for your review. They include questions like, which individuals within the healthcare sector will be the target of the legislation? How will we ensure that someone who holds the certificate continues to learn, as advancements in the field inevitably change practice? Is title protection appropriate for a certificate (typically this is reserved for licensed professions in Ohio), and what body will enforce it? All of these questions should be addressed before moving this bill out of Committee.

To these questions, we add the following thoughts. During the past two hearings, multiple goals for this legislation have been shared by way of testimony and questions from the committee members.

These goals include:

- increasing the competency of our workforce to respond to this growing need;
- providing the case for bolstering wages of front line caregivers; and
- offering "truth in advertising" for families seeking care for a loved one—to help them know that any provider claiming to offer memory care does, indeed, possess the expertise to care for this special population.

We believe that any one of these goals would demand a slightly different, dedicated strategy, and that many of the challenges of the bill in its current form stem from trying to pursue many different goals through a single vehicle. By narrowing the focus to one or two goals, we believe we could craft better legislation that would move Ohio in the intended direction, towards a more responsive and transparent system of care for older adults living with dementia and the people who love and care for them.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have via email or phone. Contact Kathryn Brod at kbrod@leadingageohio.org or 614-545-9014.