

Written testimony in support of HB 286 – Identify need and provide support for palliative care
Meeting of the Aging and Long Term Care Committee
Wednesday, October 18, 2017

Alzheimer's disease affects more than 5 million Americans, and that number is expected to reach 16 million by the year 2050.

Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in Ohio and the U.S., and the only disease among the top 10 causes without a cure, effective treatment, or way to slow its progression. It is a fatal disease that affects an estimated 210,000 Ohioans. 20 percent of Ohioans in hospice care have a primary diagnosis of dementia.

People with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias greatly benefit from palliative care. When palliative and hospice care is offered with a focus on managing and easing symptoms, reducing pain and stress, and increasing comfort, it can improve both the quality of care and quality of life for those with advanced dementia.

Nursing home residents with dementia who receive palliative care at the end of life, compared with those who do not receive such care are:

- up to 15 times less likely to die in a hospital
- nearly 2.5 times less likely to have a hospitalization in the last 30 days of life
- up to 4.6 times less likely to have an emergency room visit in the last week of life.

Because of this growing epidemic, the need for palliative care programs is pressing. Hospice care is now available in nearly three-quarters of surveyed nursing homes across the country, but less than half of surveyed nursing homes report having some type of palliative care program. Of those nursing homes with a palliative care program, only 42 percent include consultation by a physician certified in hospice/palliative care, and only 28 percent had a designated palliative care director.

We urge the State of Ohio to establish a Palliative Care and Quality of Life Interdisciplinary Council and a Palliative Care Consumer and Professional Information and Education Program. In doing so, Ohio would join national efforts to increase access to palliative care through the Palliative and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA – H.R.1676/ S.693). Ohioans living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias will greatly benefit from increased access to palliative care services in Ohio.

Respectfully submitted by the Alzheimer's Association chapters serving the state of Ohio

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Chapters in Ohio

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