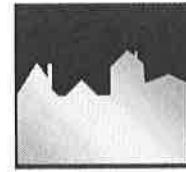


**Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee**  
**Proponent Testimony for HB286**  
**Kathy Royer, Hospice Regulatory Director**  
**Ohio Council for Home Care & Hospice**  
**January 30, 2018**



*Ohio Council for*  
**Home Care**  
**& Hospice**

Hello Chairman Burke and Members of the Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony today on HB286, Representative LaTourette's bill that aims to expand the study, education, and utilization of palliative care in Ohio. My name is Kathy Royer and I am the Hospice Regulatory Director for the Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice. I come before you today in support of HB286 on behalf of our more than 50 members that provide palliative care services throughout Ohio.

My testimony today focuses more on the value of palliative care as opposed to the provisions found in HB286. The bill is pretty straight forward in the sense that it will create the Palliative Care and Quality of Life Interdisciplinary Council at the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), direct ODH to make available education materials on palliative care, as well as begin educating individuals who need palliative care about their options, but what you may not know is why access to palliative care is so important in the health care continuum.

Palliative care is specialized medical care that provides comfort to people living with symptoms related to a chronic illness, and helps the individual and their family cope with the everyday challenges of living with that illness. The easiest way to view palliative care is as hospice care for someone who is not terminally ill. Typically, someone is only eligible for hospice care if they have less than six months left to live. Someone with a prognosis of a few years can still be in need of hospice-type care but they are not eligible for hospice because of the six-month requirement.

To fill this void in the health care delivery system home care and hospice providers have begun to offer palliative care services to individuals that choose a comfort-focused approach either after their course of treatment has concluded, or even right from the time of diagnosis of a progressive illness. In fact, over the last decade palliative care has been one of the fastest growing services in health care with much of that care being provided in the home and community based setting. We expect this trend to continue, so having Ohio begin to set standards for providers of palliative care will help to ensure a strong standard of care for individuals needing this care.

There are many factors that influence an individual's decision to begin palliative care. Ideally the decision includes a discussion with their health care team, who can offer information about options and available support. This sort of consultation would review available treatment options, the success palliative care may have in controlling symptoms, the prognosis and course of the illness, and of course the wants and desires of the individual. Unlike other health care services, not everyone needs palliative care. It's really only for those people that don't have many options when it comes to managing pain and discomfort related to a chronic illness. Without HB286, patients may not get the valuable input from their health care team and providers may not have the ability to provide palliative care information and options.

One of the major values of palliative care is that it can be provided at the same time as curative treatment and can help an individual stay safely at home, which makes a big difference to a person's quality of life. Palliative services that can be provided in the home include:

- Medical evaluations, including monitoring for common symptoms like nausea, vomiting, pain, and anxiety
- Prescribing medications to ease these symptoms
- Additional medical applications such as treating wounds and other medical needs
- Physical therapy and other rehabilitation needs
- Providing emotional, spiritual and physical support
- Providing social interaction
- Providing guidance on navigating the healthcare system and understanding individual healthcare needs

Palliative care also has a lot of value to patients when provided in the home, including:

- Maximum convenience – We come to your home, on your time.
- Remain as comfortable as possible in your own familiar surroundings.
- Avoid additional costs for hospital stays, medical fees, travel, etc.
- Receive help for medical, emotional and spiritual support needs

Overall, we believe this legislation is a good step towards creating a better understanding of the options available outside of curative treatment and hospice—both by health care consumers and health care providers. Access to palliative care will continue to become an important part of creating a better health care delivery system because it provides options to people who are typically in a difficult and vulnerable position.

In conclusion, I ask that you consider a loved one that may have suffered or who is suffering from a chronic illness. I'm sure that you would want them to have options and access to care that gives them comfort whether they continue to pursue curative treatment or not. We ask that you support the passage of HB286 to expand the study, education, and utilization of palliative care in Ohio.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.