



## **House Bill 23**

### **Proponent Testimony**

**Trey Addison, Director of Public Policy**

**2/17/2021**

Good Afternoon and thank you, Chairman Stein, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan, and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee. My name is Trey Addison, Director of Public Policy for the Alzheimer's Association. In my role, I advocate on behalf of the estimated 220,000 individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and dementia and their 600,000 family caregivers in Ohio. I also represent the most comprehensive Alzheimer's and Dementia service organization in the United States. The Alzheimer's Association is the largest non-profit funder of research in the world, works with families to support caregiver needs, provides a 24/7 Helpline, and works with individuals who have Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. In Ohio, the Alzheimer's Association serves thousands of families and individuals annually and provides support programs to all 88 counties in Ohio in partnership with the Area Agencies on Aging.

The responsibility of serving Ohio's most vulnerable population is not something we take lightly. In 2019, we fought for the introduction and the eventual passage of Senate Bill 24, which established an Ohio Alzheimer's and Dementia State Task Force. Now, we are fighting for House Bill 23.

As Ohio's aging population continues to grow, so will the number of individuals living with Alzheimer's and other Dementia. The Alzheimer's Association expects the total number of people living with Alzheimer's and Dementia to increase by more than 25% over the next four years. This statistic is alarming in several ways. In Ohio, we will see our costs rise because Alzheimer's is the most expensive disease in America. Second, Alzheimer's does not have a cure or effective treatment, so we will face this foe until we find one. Lastly, and the reason why we are fighting so hard in Ohio to protect this growing vulnerable population is 6 in 10 people with

dementia will wander. That fact alone is a potential for 132,000 interactions between someone living with Alzheimer's disease and an Ohio first responder. Wandering is just one symptom of Alzheimer's. When coupled with agitation and other behavioral symptoms, it only increases the chances of an unintended and potentially dangerous interaction between Ohio's most vulnerable and a first responder.

Ohio must act now and be proactive in our approach to helping Ohio families and first responders with necessary training and insights to prevent any negative interactions. A person with Alzheimer's disease may not remember their name or address and can become disoriented, even in a familiar place. When someone with dementia is lost, it can lead to anxiety, hostility, and in some cases, fear. This can lead to more aggressive behavior and severe agitation.

Knowing this horrific disease can cause these systems, we must equip our first responders with the tools and skills they need to help Ohio's most vulnerable. By codifying competency-based dementia training, Ohio stands with Oklahoma, South Carolina, Florida, Virginia, and Indiana as States take this issue seriously by taking action.

House Bill 23 also addresses the COVID-19 crisis head-on. Our program teams across Ohio have seen an increased amount of wandering in communities throughout Ohio. The health and safety of individuals with Alzheimer's and dementia become increasingly at-risk and frightening. The secondary and tertiary risks associated with isolation such as being unaware that there is a crisis. This pandemic also creates unfortunate consequences of social distancing where Adult Protective Services may need to intervene to protect someone from elder abuse.

We urge the House Commerce and Labor committee members to vote and pass House Bill 23 out of the committee and support this much-needed legislation when it goes to the Ohio House floor for a vote.

Thank you,

Trey M. Addison

Director of Public Policy

Ohio Alzheimer's Association