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**Written Testimony on House Bill 572**  
**House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee**  
**November 16, 2022**  
**Holly Holtzen, State Director, AARP Ohio**

Good morning Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson and distinguished members House Families, Aging and Human Services committee.

My name is Holly Holtzen, and I serve as the State Director for AARP, Ohio. AARP, with 1.5 million members in Ohio, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps empower people to choose how they live as they age, strengthens communities, and fights for the issues that matter most to families, such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

**AARP is fighting for older Americans to have high-quality, affordable options when it comes to long-term care—especially care at home. AARP is here today to express our support for HB572.** This bill would require the Departments of Aging and Medicaid to establish a payment program under the state’s Medicaid funded assisted living waiver program to ensure more Ohioans have access to affordable assisted living. This bill would increase the availability of Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) in Ohio by facilitating the use of federal housing subsidies, especially Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs), in assisted living facilities across the state. Prioritizing and increasing access to affordable assisted living as a residential option helps Ohio rebalance its Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) system to support those who wish to remain in their homes and community to receive the care they need, rather than a nursing home. Ohioans would prefer to be cared for at home, where it is often less expensive and offers better quality of life than care provided by long-term care facilities. The vast majority of Ohioans indicate they want to stay in their own homes and communities as they age.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the requirement that units are financed with federal housing subsidies will necessitate that participating providers meet federal housing standards, including residential units, and, in some cases, require private occupancy assisted living units. Increasing Home & Community Based Services (HCBS) residential options, facilitating LTSS rebalancing, and encouraging private occupancy in assisted living are amongst top priorities for Ohio’s 50+. We are recommending the cap on maximum reimbursement be deleted or, at a minimum, raised to 95% of the average nursing home reimbursement to allow state rate-setters maximum flexibility to establish a tiered payment approach that incentivizes providers to serve high needs residents in assisted living.

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<sup>1</sup> Vital Voices Survey: Issues That Impact Ohio Adults Age 45 and Older, AARP, August 2021  
[www.aarp.org/vitalvoices](http://www.aarp.org/vitalvoices)

After a lifetime of hard work and contributing to our society, seniors deserve to live with independence, security, and dignity and rebalancing our LTSS and we get close to this goal with HB 572. AARP urges state lawmakers to expeditiously pass this commonsense legislation and to support ensure that Medicaid reimbursement is sufficient to guarantee access to the full range of high-quality LTSS including ensuring access to affordable assisted living services Ohioans who want to age safely and independently in their homes.