

Written Testimony on House Bill 33

Senate Finance Committee

May 25, 2023

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Senate District 18

Greetings Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and distinguished members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Millie , Sretenovic and I have been a volunteer with AARP for 10 years. I live in Brecksville Ohio in Senate District 18. As an AARP volunteer, I help older Ohioans in a variety of ways including: help people file their taxes at no cost with the AARP Tax Aide program and help with tele-townhalls that inform our members across the state of fraud scams, policy issues, and opportunities for caregiving support. I am here today to support Ohio Department of Aging's proposal for the Healthy Aging grants program and share my experience about the importance of providing funding to help older Ohioans age in their homes.

In 1951, my family immigrated from Germany through the President Truman's Displaced Person's Act and settled in Piketon, Ohio. We were a large family of eight people and did not have a lot of money. My father saved his whole life for two things, a car to get back and forth to work and the ability to pay the cost to stay in a nursing home in his older years. In 1992, my father became ill and because of his savings was able to afford to stay – self-pay- in a better nursing home, until his death.

In 1995, I was able to buy my mother a small home and a car. She loved her home and was an avid animal lover of her two dogs and four cats. In 2004, she became sick and was hospitalized in Pike County Hospital. By this time, I lived 4 hours away and I was concerned that she would no longer be able to live alone. I talked with the hospital social worker and she made me aware of the Passport program. The program provided support that allowed Mom to stay in her home from 2004 until she died in 2012.

We must support and expand additional programs that help older Ohioans stay in their home like the Healthy Aging Grants program. My mother loved being able to stay in her house. She gardened, invited

neighbors over for tea to enjoy her homemade baked treats, and enjoyed being a part of her community. Our family visited Mom regularly and saw how happy she was in her small home.

We thought Mom was going to die in 2004. I believe the support that allowed her to stay in her home extended her life. Like many older Ohioans, Mom had humble needs and they were satisfied at a lower cost than aging in a nursing home. Anything that will allow people to stay in their home is worth the expense.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony. I'm happy to answer your questions.