

Written Testimony
Semanthie Brooks, AARP Ohio Volunteer
1069 Crow Trail · Macedonia, Ohio 44056
Senate District 27

semanthie@yahoo.com

Senate Finance Committee
Ohio FY2024-2025 Budget Bill
May 25, 2023

Greetings Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony as you consider proposed State Operating Budget FY2024-2025.

My name is Semanthie Brooks, I am a volunteer with AARP, and I currently share caregiving responsibilities for my cousin, who is a resident at the Avenue of Macedonia, a nursing home in our community.

I am submitting this testimony because I support the budget priority of AARP to ensure that nursing homes provide transparent information so Ohioans can make informed decisions about which long-term care facility best meets their needs and wishes as they age.

My cousin, who is a retired nurse, suffered a major stroke five years ago after her prescription drug plan removed her blood pressure medication from their formulary. After four months, numerous attempts at trying other meds and despite multiple failed appeals from her physician to cover the medication, my cousin was found near death on the floor of her apartment.

Following discharge from the hospital and despite what our family thought was due diligence, we chose a nursing facility for her rehab. This was the first of four facilities. She fell out of bed at the first home and was found unconscious and hospitalized. We learned that we needed to ask questions about bed safety at the second home. We were assured that precautions would be taken. They were not. Another fall, with a subsequent rehospitalization, occurred. A third nursing home was chosen. While the level of care at the nursing home was satisfactory, they were unable to provide the intensity of physical therapy that my cousin needed to regain minimal use of her left sided paralysis. In addition, distance proved to be somewhat of a challenge for her daughters and following another hospitalization we chose to move again. The Avenue in Macedonia is within two miles of one daughter and within walking distance for another daughter and me.

Having to place a loved one in a nursing home is difficult, made even more challenging because of COVID. The overall level of care has deteriorated because there are not enough staff to care for residents. Temporary staff from agencies lack experience and lack adequate training to handle the complex needs of my cousin. Personal care needs have suffered, meds are not given in a timely manner, medical devices have been neglected, mentally and physically, my cousin has declined.

Because multiple nursing homes have similar issues related to staffing, moving my cousin is not an option. With the help of the Ombudsman and increased vigilance and care from our family, we are providing more personal care and play a greater role in making sure that her medical needs are met. My cousin is blessed to have family that has remained involved and has demanded answers and changes when care needs are not met.

The “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policies of nursing homes upset the relationship between the home and residents and the home and family. Without transparency, the quality of care is harmed, and the reputation of the nursing home suffers. Transparency is essential if nursing homes are to remain a viable and requested option of care for Ohioans that require this critical level of healthcare and maintenance.

Thank you for your time and commitment.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me using the information attached to my written testimony.