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**Testimony on Senate Bill 196
Senate Health Committee
April 24, 2024**

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AARP Ohio**

Good morning, Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and distinguished members of the Senate Health Committee. My name is Kelsey Bergfeld, and I serve as an Associate State Director for Outreach and Advocacy at AARP Ohio.

AARP, with 1.5 million members in Ohio, is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to the more than 100 million Americans 50-plus and their families: health and financial security, and personal fulfillment.

AARP would like to express our support for Senate Bill 196 which would grant APRNs authority to sign or complete forms pertaining to patient care within their scope of practice.

Increasing reliable access to quality health care is a top priority for AARP members in Ohio. We believe patients should be able to receive health care from qualified health care professionals of their choice, including nurse practitioners – APRNs who typically practice primary care and are more likely to practice in rural areas than other clinicians – when and where they need it.

Senate Bill 196 would improve some access to care by providing APRNs the authority to complete or authorize tasks that they are fully trained and educated to do. By allowing APRNs to sign forms that document patient care, treatment orders, referrals, and track general health status, this bill will help avoid delays in care that hurt consumers and add stress to family caregivers who provide and oversee the care of a loved one.

Older adults and family caregivers will particularly benefit by SB 196 authorizing APRNs to sign off on the following actions:

- determining and documenting medical conditions for purposes of Home First components of the PASSPORT Program and Assisted Living Program, administered by the Ohio Department of Aging
- determining whether vaccination against influenza or pneumococcal pneumonia is medically inappropriate for a hospital patient or nursing home or residential care facility resident
- providing necessary instructions for preparing special diets in nursing homes and residential care facilities

- determining whether an individual is capable of self-administering medication in residential care facilities and
- including APRNs as mandatory reporters of abuse, neglect, exploitation and misappropriation occurring in long-term care facilities

While an important step in the right direction to help improve people's access to care and support for family caregivers, this bill is incremental. Ohio faces a shortage of primary care providers, especially in our underserved, rural communities. Consider the numbers:

- Ohio has 189 primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas.¹
- The primary care health professional shortage areas include approximately 2,401,969 patients in our state.²

Nurse practitioners can help fill the gap, providing quality health care locally for patients throughout the state—from small towns to urban areas. 97 million people in 27 states and the District of Columbia have better access to care because their policymakers removed legal barriers that prevented nurse practitioners from providing care to the full extent of their education and training.³

In addition to supporting Senate Bill 196, AARP asks this committee to consider modernizing outdated rules to let nurse practitioners do their job to the fullest extent of their education and training and stem the flow of trained health care professionals moving to other states.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of AARP. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation, Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) (2023) <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?state=OH>

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³ Center to Champion Nursing in America: Campaign for Action <https://campaignforaction.org/issue/improving-access-to-care/>