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Dustin Holfinger  
American Heart Association  
House Health Committee  
HB 104 – Proponent Testimony

Chair Schmidt, Vice-Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani and members of the House Health Committee. My name is Dustin Holfinger, and I am the state government relations director with the American Heart Association. I would like to express our support for HB 104, sponsored by Representatives Deeter and Lawson-Rowe, which would designate February 14 as Cardiovascular Health Awareness Day in Ohio.

As you are likely aware, February is already American Heart Month, a crucial time to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in the United States, and to encourage everyone to adopt heart-healthy habits. During this month, we emphasize the importance of prevention, early detection, and the life-saving impact of knowing the signs of heart attack and stroke.

Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in Ohio and across the nation. It affects individuals of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds, placing a tremendous burden on our healthcare system and our communities. While we have made significant strides in prevention and treatment, there is still much work to be done.

Designating a specific day for cardiovascular health awareness serves several crucial purposes:

- **Increased Public Awareness:** It provides a focused opportunity to educate the public about risk factors, symptoms, and prevention strategies for heart disease and stroke. This heightened awareness can empower individuals to take control of their cardiovascular health.
- **Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles:** Cardiovascular Health Awareness Day can serve as a catalyst for promoting healthy lifestyle choices, such as regular physical activity, healthy eating, and tobacco cessation.
- **Highlighting Disparities:** It allows us to shed light on the disparities in cardiovascular health outcomes among different populations and to advocate for equitable access to care.
- **Encouraging Community Engagement:** It provides a platform for community organizations, healthcare providers, and individuals to come together and organize events and initiatives that promote cardiovascular health.
- **Reinforcing the Importance of Prevention:** This day serves as a yearly reminder that cardiovascular disease is often preventable.

The American Heart Association is committed to working with policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community leaders to improve cardiovascular health in Ohio. By designating Cardiovascular Health Awareness Day, we can collectively raise awareness, promote healthy behaviors, and ultimately save lives.

We urge you to support House Bill 104 and help us create a healthier Ohio.

Thank you for your time and consideration.