

**Public Party Testimony on House Bill 96
by Charles Gehring, President and CEO of LifeCare Alliance,
before the Ohio Senate Health Committee on 5/13/25**

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Chuck Gehring, and I currently serve as President and CEO of LifeCare Alliance, one of Ohio's oldest and most comprehensive community health organizations. I am here to respectfully ask for your support for funding in the amount of \$1,200,000 through the State Operating Budget to help sustain and expand the essential services we have been providing Ohio's most vulnerable populations since 1898.

For the past 125 years, LifeCare Alliance has met the changing medical and nutritional needs of the community. We are central Ohio's first in-home health agency, Ohio's first agency to provide visiting nurses, and the nation's second agency to deliver Meals-on-Wheels. Every day, we deliver vital care and support to older adults, medically fragile individuals, and people with disabilities — allowing them to remain safe, healthy, and independent in their own homes. Our programs also include home health care, wellness centers, cancer support services, and more. In 2024 alone, LifeCare Alliance:

- Delivered over 1.5 million home-delivered meals across five counties — with **no waiting list**, even as demand skyrockets.
- Provided thousands of hours of in-home healthcare services to individuals recovering from surgery, managing chronic illness, or living with disability.
- Supported families facing life-threatening illnesses with compassionate in-home care and nutrition support.

We service approximately 23,000 clients per year, many of which are served without funding and instead are supported by our own fundraising and social enterprise efforts. Each of these clients represent \$108,000 in savings for taxpayers as a result of LifeCare Alliance's helping them age in place and out of nursing home facilities. However, as Ohio's population ages, the demand for our services continues to grow dramatically. In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2030, more than one in four Ohioans will be age 60 or older.

Without adequate funding, organizations like LifeCare Alliance risk being overwhelmed — forcing vulnerable citizens into costly emergency care, nursing facilities, or worse. Therefore, this critical investment by the State will help LifeCare Alliance:

- Keep high-risk seniors in their homes — saving taxpayer dollars by delaying or preventing institutionalization.
- Improve health outcomes for people with chronic conditions by ensuring regular nutrition, wellness checks, and early intervention.
- Strengthen Ohio's public health infrastructure with community-based solutions that are proactive, cost-effective, and compassionate.

We are greatly appreciative for the continued cooperation with the State of Ohio. Every investment you make in home- and community-based services saves the state millions in Medicaid and healthcare costs, while honoring the dignity and independence of our neighbors.

Thank you for your commitment to Ohioans' health, and for considering our request. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.