



Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging
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Criminal Justice Committee
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Presented by:

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Chairman Lang, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 441. My name is Larke Recchie and I am the CEO of the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging. We are part of a national network of over 600 on-the-ground organizations in each state, mandated by the Older Americans Act, and charged with helping Americans thrive in our homes and communities as we age. For many years, home and community-based services have been the key to meaningful, cost-effective options for older adults and people with disabilities to live healthy, engaged, secure lives in our homes and communities. Area Agencies on Aging and our provider partners are at the forefront of the effort to ensure that older Ohioans are safe and healthy at home especially during this time.

The Association supports the goals of HB 441 because education and training can help first responders address a difficult situation and ensure the safety of individuals with dementia. We are all aging, and we are living longer. In Ohio, we have the 6th largest population age 65 or older in the nation, and our ranks will continue to grow. By 2030, Ohio's population age 65 and older will increase by 40% compared to 2015.

Aging is the number one risk factor of dementia, and roughly 10% of those age 65 years and older are living with Alzheimer's disease today. Ohio is projected to see nearly a 20% increase in those living with Alzheimer's and other dementias by 2030.

First responders find themselves in unique circumstances involving people suffering with dementia. First responders may interact with people with dementia while searching for a lost individual, stopping drivers who exhibit unsafe driving, rescuing people with dementia from abuse, and intervening in crisis or disaster situations. Individuals with Alzheimer's and other dementias can also be the victims of elder abuse. But they may be unaware they are victims and may not know how to — or be able to — report it.

People with Alzheimer's may present as uncooperative, disruptive, and combative when they have difficulty communicating and understanding what is happening. First responders may not know how to work with people in these situations — leading to more confusion.

Education of the disease and training in de-escalation tactics can often effectively address the situation and ensure the safety of individuals with dementia as well as the safety of the first responders. That is why the Association supports the goals set forth by HB 441.

One component of HB 441 may need to be reviewed, however. The bill provides that first responders are to report suspicions of abuse, neglect, or exploitation to the Ohio Attorney General's office. Ohio Revised Code Section 5101.63, however, already mandates that first responders report suspicions of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of adults 60 or older to the county department of job and family services adult protective services unit for investigation. We suggest that the language proposed in HB 441 be reviewed and revised to be consistent with the Ohio Revised Code.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.