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Written Testimony on Senate Bill 341
Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee.
December 1, 2020
Holly Holtzen, State Director, AARP Ohio

Good morning Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and distinguished members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee.

My name is Holly Holtzen, and I serve as the State Director for AARP, Ohio. As you are aware, AARP, with 1.5 million members in Ohio, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps empower people to choose how they live as they age, strengthens communities, and fights for the issues that matter most to families, such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

AARP is here today to express our support for Senate Bill 341. This bill would enter Ohio into the enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact (Nurse Compact) with 33 other states and New Jersey, which is pending implementation. AARP supports state adoption of interstate licensure compacts for physicians, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, Registered Nurses, and other licensed health professionals, such as psychologists, to expand provider networks and reduce interstate barriers to the use of telehealth services.

The Nurse Compact makes it easier and affordable for nurses to practice across state lines without the cost or unnecessary delay of applying for separate licenses. This helps efficiently expand access, which is particularly important in Ohio's many underserved and remote areas. The Nurse Compact can contribute to reduced costs for healthcare providers that employ nurses and may ultimately drive lower cost for consumers.

Adopting the Nurse Compact is a common-sense way for Ohioans to expeditiously access care by encouraging nurses to provide care both in-person or through telehealth technologies in multiple states. Currently, more than 2 million nurses who live in Nurse Compact states. They have the opportunity to practice in other Compact states, improving access to care for patients in need and adding support for their family caregivers.

The need to improve access is critical in a place like Ohio, which has 155 Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas as of 2019.¹ With the help of this Compact, more Ohioans will have access to high-quality primary care services they want and deserve.

¹ Health Resources & Services Administration. <https://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/topics/shortageareas.aspx>

The enactment of Senate Bill 341 would make Ohio the 35th state to join the enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact. We urge you to vote yes to make sure Senate Bill 341 is voted out of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee.