

Good Morning Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and of the members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 78, Esther's Law, legislation aimed at permitting long-term care residents to conduct electronic monitoring of their room.

This is the second time this bill has been introduced and I am thankful to my joint sponsor, Rep. Crossman, for joining me this General Assembly to get this bill passed.

Ohio has the seventh largest senior population in the nation and we have an obligation as members of the General Assembly to protect our seniors and prevent abuse. One way we can do this is by allowing residents in our long-term care facilities to have cameras in their rooms.

Constituents have reached out to my office detailing the stories of their or their loved one's experience of abuse in nursing homes. The stories are heartbreaking and it is up to us to take action to prevent this from happening to seniors in our state. These are our moms, dads, grandparents, friends, and fellow Ohioans.

Elder abuse refers to any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any person that causes harm or serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult. Approximately 16,000 reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation are made each year in Ohio, however, the National Institute of Health estimate these reports only represent one in 14 cases!

According to Colombo Law, 50-75% of all nursing home residents experience one fall per year and HealthAging.org notes that 50-70% of residents have dementia. With many residents experiencing difficult situations that can come with aging, it is important we do what we can as legislators to keep our seniors safe.

The Ohio Promise means you can live, work, and retire with safety and security. Esther's Law helps us live up to that promise. By allowing cameras in long-term care facilities, we are helping to deter theft, prevent abuse, and put in an extra set of eyes to protect our seniors.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, most nursing home residents have been separated from their family members and friends. Throughout this long period of isolation, though necessary to keep people safe from the coronavirus, Ohioans were not always able to check in on their loved ones. Had they been allowed to have cameras in their room, both the resident and their family could have peace of mind that they were safe.

Before the pandemic, residents' loved ones could regularly visit and check up on the resident. However, as long-term care facilities had to close off visits to slow the spread of the virus, many families were left without a way to see how their loved one was doing. With what has been a stressful year for all of us, families should not have the additional worry that their mom, dad, or grandparent may be experiencing abuse. The option for electronic monitoring would help take that stress away.

This legislation is a simple step to protecting our seniors and while it was first introduced before the COVID-19 pandemic, it's clear it's needed now more than ever.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on this important legislation. I appreciate your consideration and hope we can work together to protect our seniors, our loved ones and fellow Ohioans.

I now welcome any questions the Committee has.