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Thank you Chair Manchester, Vice-Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston and all of our members of the House’s Family, Aging, and Human Services Committee for this time today presenting House Bill 78. I also want to thank my joint sponsor, Rep. Brent, for her commitment to this legislation (HB 461 in the 133rd General Assembly) and to the well-being of some of our most vulnerable citizens here in Ohio—our elderly population residing in nursing facilities.

As legislators, we know that some of our best policy ideas derive from our constituents themselves. These are people that have often had first-hand experience dealing with the issues we seek to solve and this piece of legislation is no different. HB 78, which we are referring to as “Esther’s Law” is the direct result of advocacy by our constituents attempting to ensure that the issues they and their families experienced does not happen to any other person or family in Ohio.

As my colleague capably detailed, Esther’s Law would provide a path for residents and their family members to install video monitoring systems in residents’ rooms. Allowing cameras in nursing facilities, as this legislation would allow, provides added assurance that loved ones are receiving the care that they need and are not among the thousands of Ohioans who reportedly file complaints with the state for elder abuse each year.

In the last General Assembly one of my constituents from House District 15, testified in support of Esther’s Law. His mother was Esther. In 2011, Mr. Piskor suspected that staff members were abusing his mother at her nursing facility and he was forced to take measures into his own hands by surreptitiously recording her care with a hidden camera. What he discovered through the aid of this video monitoring alarmed him to say the least—among other incidents, his mother had been tossed into a wheelchair like a rag doll after her caregiver grabbed her by the neck, screamed at her, and hit her in the face. I will let Mr. Piskor tell the rest of his story because he and the others that will come here to testify will make the compelling case of why this legislation is badly needed and why at least nine other states have already adopted similar legislation.

I surmise that some may oppose this because they fear lawsuits that may arise from recording bad behavior. I appreciate that concern and I would respond that the focus on lawsuits or legal liability is misplaced because the emphasis should be on resident safety and rooting out bad actors. Facilities with cameras installed will also benefit from this legislation with the assurance that they can immediately correct issues before something irreparable occurs.

Ohio's elderly population continues to grow annually and unless we take action we can expect that incidents of neglect and abuse will continue to increase among the elderly, particularly given that funding for Adult Protective Services has been substantially limited by the General Assembly in recent years. I urge you all to support this important legislation and I welcome any questions you may have.