



House Bill 23

Proponent Testimony

**Trey Addison, Director of Public Policy
Alzheimer's Association**

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Chairman Hoagland, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee.

My name is Trey Addison, Director of Public Policy for the Alzheimer's Association. In my role, I advocate on behalf of the estimated 220,000 individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and dementia and their 450,000 family caregivers in Ohio. I also represent the most comprehensive Alzheimer's and Dementia service organization in the United States. The Alzheimer's Association is the largest non-profit funder of research in the world, works with families to support caregiver needs, provides a 24/7 Helpline and works with individuals who have Alzheimer's disease and other dementia. In Ohio, the Alzheimer's Association serves thousands of families and individuals annually and provides support programs to all 88 counties in Ohio in partnership with the Area Agencies on Aging.

The responsibility of serving Ohio's most vulnerable population is not something we take lightly. In 2019, we fought for the introduction and the eventual passage of Senate Bill 24, which established an Ohio Alzheimer's and Dementia State Task Force. Now, we are fighting for House Bill 23.

As Ohio's aging population continues to grow, so will the number of individuals living with Alzheimer's and other Dementia. The Alzheimer's Association expects the total number of people living with Alzheimer's to increase by over 25 percent over the next decade. This statistic is alarming in several ways. In Ohio, we will see our costs rise because Alzheimer's is the most expensive disease in America. Second, Alzheimer's does not have a cure but, as of last week, we finally have a potential treatment in Aduhelm. Finally, the reason why we are fighting so hard in Ohio to protect this growing vulnerable population is 6 in 10 people with dementia will wander. That fact alone is a potential for 132,000 interactions between someone living with Alzheimer's

disease and an Ohio first responder. Wandering is just one symptom of Alzheimer's. When coupled with agitation and other behavioral symptoms, it only increases the chances of an unintended and potentially dangerous interaction between Ohio's most vulnerable and a first responder.

Ohio must act now and be proactive in our approach to helping Ohio families and first responders with necessary training and insights to prevent any negative interactions. A person with Alzheimer's disease may not remember their name or address and can become disoriented, even in a familiar place. When someone with dementia is lost, it can lead to anxiety, hostility, and in some cases, fear. This can lead to more aggressive behavior and severe agitation.

Our first responders must be knowledgeable and properly trained to identify such symptoms in individuals with dementia and to respond in an appropriate manner. As the number of those with dementia continues to increase, so too will the number of interactions between this group and our police, firefighters and EMS.

House Bill 23 also addresses a concerning trend that has put our first responders in a difficult situation, with very limited training. For example, recently in Colorado a woman with Dementia was wandering and highly agitated. Her first interaction was with a member of the law enforcement community. Unfortunately, the officer did not know the woman had Dementia and the woman began to become hostile toward the officer and he had to protect himself and other officers. The woman was later taken to the hospital with a broken arm and other injuries. In Ohio, we can do better and our first responders and individuals living with Dementia deserve more. This situation could have been prevented with a simple two hour training.

We urge the Senate Veterans and Public Safety committee members to vote and pass House Bill 23 out of the committee and support this much-needed legislation when it goes to the Ohio Senate floor for a vote.

Thank you,

Trey M. Addison

Director of Public Policy

Ohio Alzheimer's Association

