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Written Testimony on House Bill 595
Senate Judiciary Committee
November 29, 2018

Jason Smith, AARP Ohio

Thank you to Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide written testimony expressing AARP Ohio's support of House Bill 595. Since 2012, AARP has been a key player in more than 200 new laws and reforms regarding issues of probate and guardianship. Our organization fights to protect individuals who rely on their guardians for vital decision-making and support, as well as to make sure guardians have the necessary training and tools to take on their important responsibilities.

The lack of court monitoring in guardianship can often lead to abusive situations and/or the court losing track of a ward, their money, or the guardian. State courts are responsible for monitoring guardians' performance and ensuring that individuals under guardianship are protected and treated appropriately. However, with the overload of cases on the system, AARP has found that follow-up with reporting requirements and accounting required by guardians is lacking in many states across the country.

Ohio is one of many states that has taken significant steps to update guardianship policies and practices to prevent abuse and has developed standards for guardians and state guardianship programs. HB 595 takes another important step to strengthen protections for individuals who must rely on the care of a guardian and further simplifies probate and trust laws in Ohio.

AARP Ohio strongly supports the guardianship provisions in HB 595 that allow a county probate court to establish an adult guardianship services board and funds to provide for the oversight of services and care for individuals under guardianship. We believe this will allow for improved coordination within the state and help assist overburdened courts. Cutting red tape for county courts to work together to provide services to individuals under guardianship could save time, money for the individual, their families/caregivers, and the state. Additionally, when state courts work together on such cases they could not only be more efficient and effective, but they could also potentially detect signs of abuse and exploitation earlier in the legal process.

On behalf of AARP's approximately 1.5 million members in Ohio, we encourage you to support and vote favorably for HB 595 to help ensure its passage into law during this legislative session. Again, thank you for your work on this important public policy and the opportunity to express our support for your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Smith".

Jason Smith, AARP Ohio
Associate State Director - Advocacy