

February 13, 2020

The Honorable Timothy Ginter
Chair, House Aging and Long Term Care Committee
77 South High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: HB 265 – Dementia Care Certification

Dear Chairman Ginter:

I am submitting written testimony on behalf of the Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging (WRAAA) regarding HB 265, as introduced, which would create a dementia care certificate for staff in long-term care facilities and providers of community-based services.

In 2017, I served on the Ohio Task Force on Alzheimer's and Dementia that examined a wide-range of issues related to Alzheimer's Disease and dementias and identified areas in which the State could make improvements. The Task Force provided a 2018 report to the Ohio Legislature with recommendations related to dementia training requirements and the budgetary aspects of the issue.

HB 265 supports, in part, some of the efforts of the Ohio Alzheimer's and Dementia Task Force. The bill proposes that the Ohio Department of Aging design a program that would provide a requisite education and experience necessary to qualify an individual for a dementia care certificate. The training would provide the professional development needed to work with this special population.

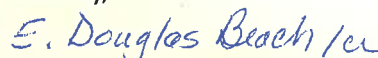
According to National Conference of State Legislatures, more home care jobs are projected to be added than any other single occupation between 2016 and 2026. However, one in two workers leave these jobs within 12 months.¹ This critical shortage of direct care workers impacts the programs administered by the area agencies on aging due to low wages and insufficient reimbursement rates. Statewide, we are experiencing an increased demand for services due to the dramatic growth in the older population.

Any additional requirements imposed on providers of care must be balanced with the fact that there are considerable challenges right now to meeting current needs. It is important to consider the unintended consequences of unfunded mandates that could potentially reduce access to services for those in need because providers or individuals do not have the resources to meet this new requirement.

In closing, I have recently been appointed to the Governor's Alzheimer's Task Force (as created by SB. 24) as the representative of Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging. The Task Force is charged with examining the needs of individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, the availability of services, and the ability of health care providers and facilities to meet the individuals' current and future needs. Issues such as workforce education and training will be part of the discussion.

As an interested party, I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important bill. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



E. Douglas Beach, Ph.D., CEO
Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging

¹ *Shoring Up the Long-Term Care Workforce*, Kate Bradford, Vol. 27, No. 28, August 2019.