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**Testimony on SB24 (Wilson)—Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias Task Force**

*Joe Russell, Executive Director, OCHCH*

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Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee. My name is Joe Russell and I’m the executive director of the Ohio Council for Home Care & Hospice (OCHCH). Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of Senate Bill 24 today.

Established in 1965, OCHCH is a non-profit trade association that represents the interests of health care at home providers in Ohio. OCHCH advocates for ethical, compassionate, and quality home and community-based care, as well as for the individuals and families our members serve. As the voice of health care at home, we strive to provide value, resources, and partnership for those who provide care for our most vulnerable citizens.

We support SB24 because our members are seeing a growing number of people with memory-related afflictions. We are supportive of any conversations around how to improve care for this population especially concerning their ability to receive those services in the community.

A 2016 Dementia Capable Ohio report by the Ohio Department of Aging stated that by the year 2025 there will be a 25% increase of Ohioans with Alzheimer’s disease, with 51% of these individuals relying on Medicaid for care. The report noted that delays in the institutionalization of these individuals would result in a potential saving to the state of approximately $6.5 million per month. In-home care can help make this savings a reality while also providing a stable and familiar environment for those suffering from dementia related illnesses.

We believe that families should have choices that support independent daily routines in familiar surroundings, as well as avoid the potentially emotional trauma of leaving their home. As an association, we have been looking at this issue for several years. In 2015, we hosted an educational program in conjunction with the Department of Aging for home care providers to explore the unique facets of mental health in older adults related to dementia and Alzheimer’s, as well as how to properly provide services and supports for these individuals. We had a lot of positive feedback on the program, but its clear more needs to be done to support community living.

In the August 2017 edition of the *Journal of the* *American Geriatrics Society*, a study from the University of Michigan reported that patients with high caregiving needs, such as dementia, are subject to a growing practice referred to as a “pop drop”. In these situations family caregivers take their loved one to the emergency room to provide themselves with a brief respite, or in some cases as a way to start the institutionalization process, often returning to pick-up their loved one after resources have already been utilized. As you can see, the conversation around this issue must be comprehensive and take into consideration the realities of individuals, families, and providers alike.

We have many suggestions that could improve care for this population, such as better utilizing technology and support family providers, but without a more comprehensive plan on what Ohio should do to support this population, Ohio will continue to lag behind other states.

That’s why this bill is so important. While we’ve had conversations around this issue in the past, we must take the critical step of formalizing the statewide policy approach. SB24 will achieve that critical first step.

We are strong supporters of Senator Hackett’s proposed amendment to the bill. This amendment designates associations to be included in this task force. Our members are very passionate about this topic and look forward to being included in the statewide plan to fight these diseases. We look forward to having in depth discussions with our members which will then be relayed to the task force by our delegate. We believe that our members will add significant value to this cause.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We ask for your support of the bill and for an amendment to strengthen the bill. We look forward to working with you on this very important. I’m happy to answer any questions at this time.