



Written Testimony on HB 339

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Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as an interested party on HB 339, which would allow Ohioans to execute wills and other death-relevant documents electronically. LeadingAge Ohio represents over 400 mission-driven, values-based providers of aging and end of life services, including affordable and market rate housing operators, assisted living, nursing homes, home health and hospice, and other home- and community-based service providers like adult day services. LeadingAge Ohio also convenes the Honoring Wishes Task Force, a coalition of health systems, post-acute providers, elder law attorneys, emergency responders and other stakeholders who support improvements to Ohio's advanced care planning documents and encourage best practices in health care decision making and communication.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced providers of aging services, families, and residents/patients to look to technology as a solution when social distancing guidelines made being in-person impossible. Family visits became video chats, screenings became automated, older Ohioans made use of streaming services, games, and online education. Telehealth soared to new heights, with patients being able to access more services over the phone and online than ever before. While many of the in-person rituals and services have thankfully returned, much was learned in the way that technology and aging services interact. As this sector has adapted, LeadingAge Ohio believes it is important for the advanced care planning processes to adapt, too.

HB339 would allow Ohio's law to catch up to practice, permitting electronic execution and storage of wills, living wills and health care powers of attorney in Ohio. During the pandemic, more older adults sought out online banking than any other application, many for the first time. As older adults have embraced online financial management, it makes sense to provide these individuals and their loved ones/caregivers the ability to securely handle wills and estate planning online as well.

This legislation would modernize estate planning documentation, to the benefit and ease of those involved. Given the ongoing risks of COVID-19, as well as those individuals with disability or mobility issues, providing the ability to complete this task online offers not only convenience and ease, but indeed, safety. In closing, we appreciate the opportunity to provide our thoughts on this legislation, and welcome any questions you may have.