



Ohio House Insurance Committee

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Proponent Testimony – HB 24, Biomarker Testing

Camren Harris, Ohio Public Policy Manager, Alzheimer's Association

Chairman Lampton, Vice Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Miranda and members of the House Insurance Committee, I am Camren Harris, Public Policy Manager for the Alzheimer's Association. On behalf of the Alzheimer's Association, we appreciate the opportunity to stand with the Ohio Biomarker Testing Coalition in support of HB24, to ensure appropriate coverage of approved biomarker testing can be used to treat and diagnose a variety of diseases, including individuals living with dementia. The Alzheimer's Association is the largest voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's and dementia care, support and research, in addition to the largest Alzheimer's advocacy organization in the world, and that is why we are part of this Coalition supporting this important legislation.

There are currently 236,000 aged 65 or older living with Alzheimer's disease, but as many as half of them are not formally diagnosed. Research has shown that an early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer's can improve access to care and supportive services, enhance quality of life and reduce the financial impact of the disease. With the historic approval of treatments that slow the progression of the disease, early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's are even more critical to ensure individuals receive the most benefit at the earliest point possible in the disease progression.

Current diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease relies largely on documenting cognitive decline, at which point, Alzheimer's has already caused severe brain damage. Experts believe that biomarkers (short for "biological markers") offer one of the most promising paths to improve dementia detection, diagnosis, and treatment.

Currently, there are some FDA-approved biomarker tools that, when applicable, can be used to aid in diagnosis of people with symptoms of Alzheimer's or another dementia (e.g., brain imaging). Some of these tools have a wealth of research and clinical data to support their use in a clinical setting (e.g. biomarkers in cerebrospinal fluid (CSF)), while other emerging biomarkers are promising but still under investigation (e.g. blood tests and genetic risk profiling). Continued progress around blood-based amyloid biomarker markers is likely to lead to new diagnostic tools coming to market within the next couple of years. Insurance coverage for biomarker testing (including blood tests, saliva tests, imaging, etc.) is currently not keeping up with scientific discoveries and progress in treatment. Existing health care disparities and challenges to obtaining a dementia diagnosis may be exacerbated if new biomarker testing opportunities cannot be accessed.

Without taking action on this legislation, dementia diagnoses may take up to two years, increasing the long-term costs to the individual, family and the state. Because diagnosis leads to lower costs of care for people living with dementia, access to biomarker testing can accelerate these cost savings. In a 2018 special analysis on the financial and personal benefits of early diagnosis conducted by the Alzheimer's Association, diagnosis led to projected cost savings of approximately \$63,000, of which \$30,000 was in Medicare savings, \$20,000 in Medicaid savings, and \$13,000 in other savings. ([2018 Alzheimer's Facts and Figures](#)).

Please support the passage of HB 24 to ensure that Ohioans can obtain biomarker testing, which will reduce the time it takes to receive a dementia diagnosis and enable access to new treatments and care planning. Without this legislation, dementia diagnoses may take up to two years, increasing the costs of care and decreasing quality of life. An earlier and faster diagnosis gives individuals and families more time, rather it is cancer or Alzheimer's disease that impacts them.

Thank you.