

Testimony in Support of HB24

Eric Elam
(Title and Address)

Mr. Chairman and esteemed committee members,

I'm Eric Elam, president and owner of Elam Associates, a Cincinnati-based branding and marketing company. My clients include Graeters, HORAN Wealth and Meyer Foods, so I am keenly aware of the many challenges businesses face in today's highly competitive and complex climate. Early in my career I spend 9 years with Community Mutual Blue Cross & Blue Shield, predecessor to Anthem Blue Cross & Blue Shield, so I understand the principles of health insurance, as well.

I also have a deep personal connection to Alzheimer's disease. My father passed away in 2021 after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2019. Soon after my father's passing my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and she's battling the disease today. Next week she turns 93. Caring for my parents has fueled my passion for ending Alzheimer's and all other dementia.

I'd like to thank you for allowing me time to voice my support for Ohio House Bill 24.

Today, more than 7 million Americans are currently affected by Alzheimer's disease - 236,000 right here in Ohio - and studies predict that those numbers will nearly double by 2060. According to the National Centers for Disease Control, Alzheimer's disease is the fifth-leading cause of death in the United States. It is also one of our nation's most costly diseases, with a total estimated cost of \$360 billion last year.

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 of treatments at the earliest point possible.

As you know, biomarkers are measurable biological changes that can show if a disease is present, or if a person is at risk for developing a disease. Methods for detecting biomarkers can include conducting imaging scans and collecting samples of blood, saliva, urine and cerebrospinal fluids.

HB 24, sponsored by Rep. Andrea White, will ensure that Ohio residents can obtain biomarker testing which will reduce the time for a dementia diagnosis and provide 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 for those living with the disease.

Because diagnosis leads to lower costs of care for people living with dementia, and access to biomarker testing can accelerate these savings. Biomarker testing will reduce the time to obtain a dementia diagnosis and give access to new treatments and care planning.

Earlier diagnosis and treatments will also benefit millions of family caregivers who struggle daily with juggling their work responsibilities while caring for a loved one.

As many as half of the 236,000 Ohioans living with Alzheimer's are undiagnosed. Biomarker testing will reduce the number of individuals without a formal diagnosis.

HB24 has the support of more than 50 health organizations, including the American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network, the Alzheimer's Association, the ALS Association and the Arthritis Foundation.

And as of last month, 14 states have enacted legislation requiring coverage in both public and private insurance plans, including Indiana, Kentucky and Illinois.

It is time for Ohio to follow suit, not only for those living with Alzheimer's, today and in the future, but also for those indirectly affected, including our business community who must deal with absenteeism, turnover and burnout related to personal caregiving responsibilities at home for an ever-growing number of their employees.

My mother and father were not able to benefit from biomarker testing. I'm before you today in hopes that future generations can realize the benefits of earlier detection made possible by biomarker testing.

I urge your support of HB24. Thank you, Mr. Chairman