

**Testimony of
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Associate State Director
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before
The House Finance and Appropriations Committee
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Chairperson Amstutz, Vice chair Carey, Leader Sykes and members of the House Finance and Appropriations Committee, we at AARP recognize the difficulty you face in attempting to ensure high quality essential state services and to balance the state budget for the upcoming biennium. As advocates for Ohio's 1.5 million AARP members we also take this challenge seriously. As you do, we recognize the need to ensure that our older consumers in need of long-term care are able to secure the care they need, in the right setting, at a price the state and they can afford. We believe that a strong high quality spectrum of services must be available for those consumers needing long-term care assistance whether the consumer is private pay or Medicaid assisted. As you continue to review and consider additional clarifications and improvements to the Governor's proposed budget in preparation for the House adopted version, we request you give particular attention to the following issues of concern.

It is AARP Ohio's position that a full spectrum of easily accessible services must be available to our consumers. While our consumers in need of high acuity assistance may require high quality care in a nursing facility, the state likewise needs an equally accessible system which ensures the same high quality care is available to the consumer who can remain in their home. Not only do we need to ensure that the revenues necessary are available for nursing facility care, we must also ensure that those who can remain in their home as a result of a joint partnership with family, friends and the state, enjoy the same access for services in home and community based programs (HCBS). The HCBS waiver programs must be equally accessible for those able to remain in their home. HCBS makes economic sense at one-third the nursing facility cost. We strongly urge the House to ensure that HCBS programs are also equally available for consumers to access revenues for those consumers meeting the level of care and financial needs just as is done for those qualifying for nursing facility care. Our consumers must also be able to receive the care they need, at less cost to the state and federal government, where they want to be – in their own home.

In order to achieve a real balance in Medicaid services, it is imperative that provisions of the state statutes are structured to ensure that all Medicaid eligible consumers be aware of the ability to remain in their home to receive their needed care, unless the care they need cannot be reasonably provided in a cost efficient manner in their home. As a participant in the federal Medicaid program, the state of Ohio ensures any Medicaid eligible consumer in need of nursing facility care access to receive the care they need. It makes equity and economic sense to ensure this same access is available to those Medicaid eligible consumers who can stay in their home at one-third the cost.

In order to implement this foundation to a quality long-term care system, it is essential that the resources to ensure all consumers approaching Medicaid eligibility have access to personalized care planning assistance through the aging disability resource network already functioning well in Ohio. Additionally, once enrolled in Ohio's long-term care program it is also essential that quality care management is in place. In addition to care planning assistance, Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) have provided the quality assurance and management controls needed to ensure Ohio's revenues are spent wisely.

While we can all work to find increased efficiencies and more economical methods to gain maximum utilization of our investments, further evaluation is imperative before implementing any alternate approaches such as managed care. The AAA's sense of responsibility, commitment to providing high quality care coordination and management, and their unblemished reputation provide a high level of confidence in their service. Any departure from this approach should require a thorough examination is conducted, and review and approval by at least the bipartisan leadership of the legislature before implementation.

Let me clearly state our appreciation for your efforts in meeting the challenge of balancing the budget at a time when resources are severely limited. A sincere thank you to each and every one of you.

I will be happy to attempt to answer any questions you may have.