



For more information, contact:  
Larke Recchie, [recchie@ohioaging.org](mailto:recchie@ohioaging.org)  
614-488-6573 (o)  
614-557-6239 (c)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 24, 2009

**Advocates unite to expand home care options  
*Helping older adults and saving money***

Columbus, OH – Advocates for older adults, organized by the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging, gathered in support at the Statehouse today as legislation was introduced to allow more elderly Ohioans to receive care at home.

Sponsored by Republican Sen. John Carey and Democrat Sen. Dale Miller, the bill would expand the Home First program that allows people living in nursing facilities immediate access to home and community care without delays imposed by waiting lists for these services. Currently, people discharged from hospitals don't have that option and are forced into nursing facilities or required to wait for home and community services. As proposed, Home First would extend to older adults leaving hospitals or in abusive and self-neglect situations, as well as those who have depleted their assets in assisted living, or whose physicians have signed that they are at risk of nursing facility placement within 30 days.

Due to cuts in state Medicaid funding in July 2009, approximately 2,600 people have gone onto waiting lists before receiving PASSPORT and Assisted Living programs that pay for such services as personal care and medical equipment and supplies. Making matters worse, the monthly enrollment for in-home and community services will be reduced from 680 slots to 500 slots statewide beginning December 1.

In addition to offering consumers more choices, Home First reduces state spending on health care. It costs about \$20,000 a year to care for someone at home, versus \$60,000 in a nursing facility.

"Many older adults with assistance from caregivers just need help with meals or other necessary services in the privacy and comfort of their own homes and don't need a nursing facility's array of intensive services," said Larke Recchie, executive director of the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging. "Taxpayers shouldn't have to pay more for the same services if they can receive essential care in their home."

MORE



Scripps Gerontology Center studies report that with every month an older adult remains in a nursing facility, the opportunity to return home diminishes. Keeping older adults from unnecessary nursing facility placement also eliminates the trauma of transition and decreases depression.

An AARP survey found that 93 percent of Ohioans prefer to receive care in their own home. Gary and Billie Chaffin, of Orient, are caregivers to Gary's 94-year-old father, who is now living at home, thanks to Home First.

"Dad was in the nursing home for three years, and no one there talked to us about other options," Billie Chaffin said. "A friend who was a nurse told us about PASSPORT. She said they could help with home care and the steps in our home. We called and found out Dad was eligible for PASSPORT through Home First, and within a week, Dad was in our home." she said.

"Now he's happy getting the personal care he needs, in familiar surroundings. He's even gained 12 pounds. I wish everyone knew about these options."

The legislation has attracted bipartisan support, unusual for a legislative session dominated by party-line rifts. Senators Carey and Miller have been joined in support by Republican Senators Grendell, Schaffer and Bill Seitz (Cincinnati) and Democrat Senators Cafaro, Miller, Morano, Strahorn, and Turner.

"Senator Carey has long been an advocate for older adults, and we're grateful that he reached across the aisle to achieve bipartisan support for Home First expansion," said OAAAA president Duana Patton, director of Area Agency on Aging 5 in Mansfield. "It shows that legislators understand that home care results in higher quality of life and savings to the state budget," she said.

Ohio ranks among the 10 worst states in the nation for disproportionate nursing facility spending. "Home First helps put some balance into the long-term care system in Ohio. It makes sense for the state to invest in home care. Ohioans prefer it, and in-home care and community services reduce spending at a time when Ohio is facing budget deficits," Recchie noted.

Expanding Home First does not require an additional appropriation because the legislature designated existing funds to improve the balance between nursing facility and home care.

### **Ageing advocates endorse Home First expansion**

AARP  
AOPHA  
Ohio Assisted Living Association  
Ohio Association of Adult Day Services  
Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
Ohio Association of Gerontology and Education  
Ohio Association of Regional Long Term Care Ombudsman  
Ohio Association of Senior Centers  
Ohio Coalition of Adult Protective Services  
Ohio Council of Home Care and Hospice  
Ohio Olmstead Task Force  
Older Ohioans Nutrition Network

*The Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (OAAAA), a nonprofit organization, is a statewide network of agencies that provide services for the elderly, as well as advocate on behalf of older Ohioans. The Association addresses issues which have an impact on the aging network, provides services to members, and serves as a collective voice for Ohio's Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs.)*