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**House Bill 530 Testimony of Eli Faes  
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House Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
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Good afternoon, Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Abdullahi, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee. My name is Eli Faes, and I serve as Director of Public Policy for LeadingAge Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 530.

LeadingAge Ohio represents nearly 400 mission-driven providers serving older Ohioans across the state. In a given year, our members employ approximately 35,000 individuals and serve nearly 400,000 older Ohioans. Our membership spans the full continuum of aging services, including affordable and market-rate senior housing, life plan communities, nursing facilities, assisted living, home health, hospice, palliative care, adult day services, and the organizations working to stand up Ohio's PACE programs. More than 90 percent of our members are nonprofit, and a significant majority are faith-based or faith-rooted organizations. They exist not to maximize margin, but to maximize mission — and that mission depends on a stable, qualified, and sustainable caregiving workforce.

Ohio's long-term care workforce shortage is not a temporary disruption; it is structural. Home health and personal care aides remain the number one "top job" in Ohio, with more than 16,000 openings statewide. Nurse assistants face thousands of additional vacancies, representing large vacancy rates in settings that provide essential daily care to older Ohioans. This can translate into delayed discharges, closed nursing facility beds, reduced admissions in assisted living, limited access to home- and community-based services, and families stretched beyond capacity trying to fill gaps in care. At the same time, Ohio's population continues to age, and demand for services is only increasing.

House Bill 530 recognizes that the long-term care workforce challenge is multifaceted and requires a coordinated, cross-system response. Importantly, the Commission structure brings together legislators, direct care workers, providers, higher education representatives, consumers,

and state agencies. That breadth of representation is essential.

Ohio has taken meaningful steps in recent years to strengthen workforce development more broadly. Programs such as TechCred and IMAP have been valuable tools to support upskilling and credential attainment, largely for technology-focused careers. However, long-term care presents unique challenges, and remains underrepresented in state programs aimed at growing and improving Ohio's workforce. Providers operate within reimbursement-driven wage constraints, must comply with regulatory staffing expectations, and deliver care 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The physical and emotional demands of caregiving are significant. Addressing these realities requires targeted attention and sustained policy focus specific to long-term care. LeadingAge Ohio has advocated for more public investments in caregiving careers since as far back as 2017, hoping to gain the attention that other high-need sectors have received.

LeadingAge Ohio believes the Commission's work should carefully consider how to create true career ladders within caregiving professions so that individuals entering as direct care workers can see a viable, long-term pathway for advancement. Educational opportunities must be accessible and flexible, particularly for workers who are already employed while pursuing additional credentials. Barriers such as transportation, child care, and benefit cliffs should be part of the conversation, as they materially affect recruitment and retention. Finally, recommendations must be paired with practical funding strategies. Without alignment between workforce initiatives and Medicaid reimbursement structures, even the strongest policy ideas will struggle to achieve meaningful scale.

House Bill 530 presents a strategic opportunity to align workforce development, higher education policy, and long-term care reform. If done well, the Commission's work can inform thoughtful investments in future state operating budgets, strengthen Ohio's aging services infrastructure, and improve job quality for thousands of Ohioans while ensuring access to care for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

LeadingAge Ohio supports House Bill 530 because it acknowledges that the long-term care workforce challenge requires deliberate, statewide leadership and collaboration. Should House Bill 530 become law, our members stand ready to assist the Commission's work, provide data and real-world insight, and help translate recommendations into workable policy solutions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.