

*Written Testimony*

*Aging Committee*

*February 25, 2016*

*Elizabeth B. Ritter, State Department on Aging*

Senator Flexer, Representative Serra, Senator Kelly, Representative Bolinsky and distinguished members of the Aging Committee. My name is Betsy Ritter. I am the Commissioner of the State Department on Aging. I am here today to offer testimony in support of SB 166: AN ACT EXPANDING UTILIZATION OF PATIENT-DESIGNATED CAREGIVERS, and to thank the committee for raising this bill on our agency's behalf.

Recently passed legislation - the CARE Act, or Public Act 15-32 - requires hospitals to provide patients with the opportunity to designate caregivers and to provide persons who are designated as caregivers applicable instruction in providing care upon the patient's discharge from the hospital. The Act ensures that caregivers are given direct contact with hospital staff by being included on medical records, that they are notified in advance of discharges and given plain language instruction on any medical tasks that the caregiver will need to perform in the home.

PA 15-32 does not address the increasing number of residents discharged to home from skilled nursing home facilities, as well as rehabilitation facilities within nursing homes, who are cared for by their loved ones. Caregivers are often members of the individual's immediate family, but they may also be friends or other community members. Although most caregivers are asked to assist an individual with basic activities of daily living, many are expected to perform complex tasks, such as administering multiple medications, providing wound care, and operating medical equipment. Despite the vast importance of caregivers in the individual's day-to-day care, many feel that they do not have the necessary skill set to perform the caregiving tasks that are needed when a loved one is discharged from a hospital or nursing facility. SB 166 is intended to support those residents and the more than 500,000 caregivers who provide care for their loved ones at home, and promotes aging in place.

