

The Village Common of Rhode Island

Aging Better Together

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair

Testimony by H. Philip West Jr on April 23, 2024,

in support 24-H 7208 by Rep. Meghan L. Cotter

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

Thank you, Chairman Abney and members of the House Committee on Finance, for today's hearing and for your crucial work in preparing a responsible budget for the state. **The Village Common of Rhode Island hereby urges you to recommend 24-H 7208 by Rep. Meghan Cotter for passage.**

My name is H. Philip West, Jr., and I serve as a volunteer lobbyist on behalf of The Village Common of Rhode Island, a statewide non-profit that helps older adults live safely and independently in their homes. In communities across Rhode Island, our locally organized and operated villages deploy hundreds of helpful volunteers. Our volunteer-centered approach enhances lives, strengthens communities, and saves money. Our motto is "Aging Better Together."

We in the Village Common join the Senior Agenda Coalition and other organizations that support Rep. Cotter's modest updating of tax credits for low-income older adults and disabled persons. This legislation would: (1) increase the income range for eligibility from \$35,000 to \$50,000, and (2) increase the maximum credit to \$850 for older adults and disabled persons who own or rent their homes.

Our state's red-hot housing market is crushing many Rhode Islanders. Older adults — particularly those who are caregivers — often feel hemmed in by low incomes and soaring costs. Many cope bravely with their financial stresses, but fears for the future take a toll on their health. Feelings of financial desperation multiply age-related risks of heart disease, stroke, and dementia.

Without question there is enormous pressure on large numbers of low-income adults. The Housing Fact Book for 2023 shows that our state has an acute shortage of rental homes that are affordable and available to households with low incomes. More than fifty-six thousand renters are "cost-burdened" or "severely cost-burdened," meaning that they must spend more than a third or even more than half of their income on housing. Many of those feeling this pressure are minimum wage-earners hold one or more full-time service jobs.

Rep. Cotter's legislation will ease the strain on those least able to advocate for themselves. For some, this modest relief may interrupt what feels like a slide toward losing the only place where they feel safe. Few of those who feel a measure of relief from this change in tax law will ever know your names, but you will add to their sense of security. **On behalf of The Village Common, I urge the Committee on Finance to recommend 24-H 7208 for passage.**

Respectfully,



H. Philip West Jr., Lobbyist #12757

hphilipwestjr@icloud.com