



Testimony of Matthew Netto, AARP Rhode Island  
**Governor's FY 2027 – Governor's Commission on Disabilities**  
House Finance Committee  
Subcommittee on Human Services  
March 11, 2026

Chairwoman Tanzi and Members of the SubCommittee on Human Services:

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with 38 million members nationwide and over 125,000 members here in Rhode Island. We advocate on behalf of issues that impact older adults, and we appreciate the opportunity to offer our support for the work of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities.

Among other responsibilities, the Governor's Commission on Disabilities administers the Rhode Island Livable Home Modification Grant Program. This program provides grants to older Rhode Islanders who are disabled to modify their homes (including adding wheelchair ramps, chair lifts, and walk-in/roll-in showers) allowing them to age in place in their home and community.

The Livable Home Modification Grant Program provides eligible Rhode Island homeowners and renters with reimbursement for home accessibility renovations. Participants can receive up to fifty percent (50%) of their total project costs, with a maximum award of forty-five hundred dollars (\$4,500), for modifications that meet nationally recognized accessibility standards.

Highlights of the Livable Home Modification Program include the following:

- By keeping people in their own home and not nursing homes the state is saving state taxpayer dollars because of savings on Medicaid cost.
- By increasing accessible home inventory, these modifications – walk-in/roll-in shower, chair lifts, wheelchair ramps, etc. -- become permanent assets that can benefit future residents.
- Home modifications can help greatly to reduces falls. Falls are the leading cause of injury hospitalizations in RI and most of these people are age 65 and over.

The Office of Healthy Aging website states that in Rhode Island, over 31 percent of residents are age 55 or older, compared to 28 percent nationally. By 2030, it is estimated that one in four Rhode Islanders will be 65 or older, while adults living with disabilities in Rhode Island account for 13 percent of the total state population, versus 12 percent nationally.



According to AARP Rhode Island's Vital Voices survey, conducted in November of 2023, the majority (83%) of Rhode Island residents age 45+ would, if needed, prefer to receive care or help for themselves or loved ones at home with caregiver assistance. The survey also showed that 48% of caregivers have used their own money to make changes to a home for the loved one in their care. Lastly, the survey showed that 94% of Rhode Island residents age 45+ strongly or somewhat support the state reallocating funds so that more people can be cared for in their homes.

We need to invest in older Rhode Islanders' ability to remain in our own homes as we age. It is both fiscally smart and the right thing to do for older Rhode Islanders, our families, and our state as a whole. The Livable Home Modification Grant Program works and has room to grow with proper funding. For these reasons we are asking that the FY27 funding for the Livable Home Modification Grant Program be increased to match the funding included in the FY26 enacted budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt R Netto".

Matthew Netto  
Associate State Director, AARP-RI  
401-834-0524 / mnetto@aarp.org