



Daniel J. McKee
Governor

Maria E. Cimini
Director

March 11, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chair, House Committee on Judiciary
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

via email: Rep-Craven@rilegislature.gov
via email: HouseJury@rilegislature.gov

Re: H-5646 – Relating to Courts and Civil Procedure – Procedure Generally – Jury Lists

Dear Chairman Craven:

I write today regarding House Bill 5646, which would make persons seventy (70) years of age or older eligible for exemption from jury service. The Office of Healthy Aging (OHA) is charged by statute to act as Rhode Island's chief advocate for older adults, family caregivers, and adults living with disabilities. As such, OHA expresses concern that older adults would be largely absent from the jury trial process upon passage of this bill. Acknowledging and including the increased diversity, vitality, and longevity that characterize the older population only benefits the justice system. According to Marquette University School of Law Elder's Advisor Law Review, evidence suggests that people aged sixty-five and older already faced discrimination throughout all phases of jury selection – from summons to final empaneling. Allowing for older adults to be exempted from jury service purely based on age is ageism and is harmful not only to potential older jury members, but also to the parties to the lawsuits.

The 2020 Census reports that 18.3% of Rhode Islanders are aged 65 or older, and 12.4% of the state population is age 70 or older. Allowing for exemption for Rhode Islanders aged 70 and older could result in between 136,000 and 200,000 older adults not available to serve as part of a diverse juror pool. OHA suggests that there are many ways which an older adult – or any Rhode Islander unable to serve on a jury – can be exempted from service. Mobility and accessibility limitations can be considered by the jury commissioner when an individual is summonsed, as can be health and medical concerns.

As always, I thank you for your partnership and consideration of this letter. Your leadership and advocacy for Rhode Island's older adults and their families are appreciated.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria E. Cimini".

Maria E. Cimini
Director

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

The Honorable Jason Knight
Nicole McCarty, Esquire – Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker
Lynne Urbani, Policy Director