



Testimony of Matt Netto, AARP Rhode Island
In support of House Bill 7968
House Labor Committee
March 5, 2026

Chairman Corvese and members of the House Labor Committee:

AARP is a nonpartisan, social mission organization with 38 million members nationwide and nearly 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 improving the TDI/TCI program by increasing the number of weeks a worker can use annually, expanding who you can utilize the program to care for, and provide an opt-in option for self-employed workers as House Bill 7968 from Representative Giraldo proposes to do.

Family caregivers want lawmakers to understand their lives, experience their everyday challenges and take action to support them. Family caregivers help their older parents, spouses and other loved ones with medications and medical care, meals, bathing and dressing, chores, paperwork and much more. Many do it all while also working full or part-time. Some are on call 24/7, and often they can't take a break. They also spend an average of more than \$7,200 every year on caregiving expenses.

According to AARP Rhode Island's recent "Vital Voices" Survey of Rhode Islanders 45 and older, one in five of Rhode Island residents age 45+ are currently providing unpaid care to an adult relative or friend. The majority of respondents – 83% -- told us that providing care for a loved one is extremely or very important to them.

Family caregivers are the backbone of our system of long-term care. AARP's "Caregiving in the US 2025" report highlights the critical contributions of caregivers in our state. The report shows that there are an estimated 206,000 family caregivers in Rhode Island. 70% of family caregivers report working while providing care and 44% experienced at least one negative financial impact such as taking on debt, stopping savings, or being able to afford basic expenses. Having to alter life to care for loved ones is more commonplace than ever. The impacts of these realities result in increasing stress and demands on families, often presenting a choice between providing care to a loved one or paying the bills.

House Bill 7968 would improve the Temporary Caregiver Insurance program in two very important ways. It would increase the number of weeks a person can use, from 8 to 12, and expand who you can utilize the program to care for. The bill expands eligibility to allow workers to take caregiver leave to support not only immediate family members, but also grandchildren and care recipients—defined as individuals for whom the worker is responsible for providing or arranging health- or safety-related care. This is a meaningful update because caregivers in Rhode Island are not limited to traditional family structures.

AARP supports House Bill 7968 because it makes important steps towards making our TCI program stronger. With paid family leave stalling out in the United States Congress, it is

on states to ensure that families have the tools to care for loved ones without fear of financial peril. We urge you to recommend passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Netto". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Matt Netto

Associate State Director, AARP Rhode Island