



Testimony of Catherine Taylor, AARP Rhode Island
In support of House Bill 7062
House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
January 25, 2024

Chairman Casey and Members of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing:

My name is Catherine Taylor, and I am the State Director of AARP Rhode Island. 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 expanding access to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) as outlined in House Bill 7062, An Act Relating To Towns and Cities – Zoning Ordinances.

We would like to start by thanking the Housing Affordability Commission, the Land Use Commission, and Speaker Shekarchi for prioritizing this important housing option for older Rhode Islanders our families and caregivers. The accessory dwelling unit bill that was passed during the 2022 session was a great step forward and we believe that House Bill 7062 will once again make important improvements to our ADU regulations while also providing municipalities with more detail and further guidance on how to apply the law at the local level.

Accessory apartments, sometimes called accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, have potential to improve the lives of older adults, family caregivers, and people of all ages. According to AARP Rhode Island's November 2023 Vital Voices Survey over half (53%) of Rhode Island residents age 45+ would consider creating an ADU if the space was available. In addition, a strong majority (79%) of Rhode Island residents age 45+ strongly or somewhat support town ordinances that make it easier for property owners to create an ADU.

As a reminder, in the 2021 AARP Home and Community Preferences Survey¹, adults aged 18 or older who would consider creating an ADU said they'd do so in order to:

- provide a home for a loved one in need of care (86%)
- provide housing for relatives or friends (86%)
- have a space for guests (82%)
- create a place for a caregiver to stay (74%)
- increase the value of their home (69%)
- feel safer by having someone living nearby (67%)
- earn extra income from renting to a tenant (63%)

AARP's 2023 Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Scorecard ranks Rhode Island 51st, or dead last, in the country for Housing for Older Adults. In addition, AARP's 2023 Livability Index gave Rhode Island an overall housing score of 40. The national average is 48. Rhode Island is experiencing a housing crisis and

¹ <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/community/info-2021/2021-home-community-preferences.html>

housing instability amongst older adults is growing more common since many are living on a fixed income or have limited ability to increase their income. Unable to keep up with rising costs, many older Rhode Islanders are being forced to leave their homes and communities. Some of these individuals are even experiencing homelessness for the first time. We need to provide older Rhode Islanders with the housing options that they need in order to age in place. ADUs provide support and extra income to those who are at risk of being priced out of their communities

In conclusion, the proposed provisions in House Bill 7062 address almost all of the major issues that restrict ADU creation and utilization across the state. It is important for all municipalities to accept and encourage greater access to and utilization of ADUs. Rhode Islanders in every corner of this state can benefit from the options that ADUs offer. Thank you for your time this evening and for the opportunity to testify in support of this important piece of legislation.

Have a great evening.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Catherine Taylor

State Director, AARP Rhode Island