

The Village Common of Rhode Island

Aging Better Together

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair

Testimony by H. Philip West Jr on March 13, 2025,
in support of 25-H 5719 by Representative Lauren Carson

OLDER ADULTS AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

Thank you, Chairman Shanley and members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections for this hearing. **I testify in support of 25-H 5719 that would (1) replace various terms for older adults in the Rhode Island General Laws with "older adult," (2) establish a Permanent Legislative Oversight Commission on Aging Rhode Islanders, and (3) add The Village Common of Rhode Island to that panel.**

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. We coordinate volunteer services through locally organized and operated villages in Barrington, Burrillville, Cranston, Glocester, Middletown, Newport, Pawtucket, Portsmouth, Providence, Warwick, and Westerly. We are currently helping form new local villages in Bristol-Warren, Exeter, Cumberland, and Jamestown. The Village Common now has 525 members and 355 volunteers. **Our volunteers save lives and money. Our motto is: "Aging Better Together."**

We commend Representative Carson for her strong interest and advocacy for older adults and older persons with disabilities and the truly outstanding work she has done as Chair of the Special Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations Pertaining to Services and Coordination of State Programs Relating to Older Rhode Islanders.

The creation of a Permanent Legislative Oversight Commission on Aging Rhode Islanders as called for in 25-H 5719 will provide assurance that the important work the Special Legislative Commission will continue. The permanent commission would be charged with comprehensive research, creating a state master plan on aging, and planning for the restructuring and returning of the Office of Healthy Aging to a cabinet level department. Given the projected significant growth in the state's older population such a permanent commission will provide an effective way to advise the General Assembly on matters of importance to Rhode Island older adults and to ensure adequate planning is done to support development of policies and programs to meet the needs of our growing and diverse population of older Rhode Islanders.

Rep. Carson's legislation includes several other provisions we support: (1) adding a representative of a statewide advocacy organization age sixty (60) or older to the State Planning Council, and (2) updating terms used for older adults throughout the General Laws.

We also respectfully ask that consideration be given to adding the executive director of the Village Common of Rhode Island or her designee to the membership of the proposed permanent commission.

Respectfully,



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