



State of Rhode Island
Office of Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos

March 13, 2025

The Honorable Evan Shanley
Chair, House Committee on State Government and Elections
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for H 5719 – 2025

Dear Chairman Shanley,

I write to express my strong support for House bill 5719 which seeks to modernize language in Rhode Island law regarding older adults and adults with disabilities, establish a Permanent Legislative Oversight Commission on Aging Rhode Islanders, add an older adult organization representative to the state planning council, and make improvements to the Long-Term Care Coordinating Council.

As Lieutenant Governor and Chair of the Long-Term Care Coordinating Council (LTCCC), I have seen firsthand the challenges that Rhode Island's aging population faces. The number of older adults in our state is growing, and we must ensure that our policies, services, and resources reflect their needs with dignity, inclusivity, and efficiency.

The proposed revision of terminology to replace outdated terms like "elder," "senior citizen," and "handicapped" with more person-centered language—such as "older adult" and "adult with disabilities"—is an essential step toward ensuring Rhode Island's statutes reflect modern, respectful, and inclusive terminology. This change is more than symbolic; it acknowledges the evolving understanding of aging and disability while making it easier for individuals to navigate the services available to them.

The creation of a Permanent Legislative Oversight Commission on Aging Rhode Islanders is a crucial step toward better coordination of services for older adults across the state. By bringing together key stakeholders—including state agencies, senior service providers, advocacy organizations, and older adults themselves—this commission will be positioned to:

The commission's focus on improving state policy, funding allocation, and service efficiency will allow Rhode Island to build a stronger, more age-friendly state where older adults can maintain their independence and quality of life.

Finally, I wish to express wholehearted support for the proposed changes to the LTCCC, a public body comprised of 33 stakeholders which includes your colleagues in the General Assembly, advocates, working nurses and doctors, and Rhode Islanders who rely on the long-term care services the Council oversees. While this diversity of viewpoints makes the Council stronger, it also creates significant logistical issues for scheduling. This bill would set the quorum requirement to twelve members, down from the seventeen members required under current statute. As Chair of the LTCCC, I am proud to have held significantly more meetings than the four annual meetings required by law. This more frequent schedule has allowed us to respond to current issues more rapidly and to produce more work on behalf of Rhode Islanders. However, because of the diverse scheduling requirements of the membership, several of

these additional meetings have not met quorum, slowing our progress on this vital work. This would put the statute in line with that of the Emergency Management Advisory Council (EMAC), another, larger policy council managed by my office. By bringing the quorum requirement of the LTCCC in line with that of the EMAC, we can ensure each meeting is as productive as possible.

H 5719 takes several meaningful steps to support Rhode Island's aging population and reflects our state's commitment to prioritizing the well-being of older adults and individuals with disabilities. I respectfully urge the committee to advance House bill 5719 and appreciate your commitment to policies that enhance the lives of Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sabina Matos".

Sabina Matos
Lieutenant Governor
State of Rhode Island