



March 19, 2026

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House Committee on State Government and Elections
State House, 82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903
via email: Rep-Shanley@rilegislature.gov
via email: HouseStateGovernmentandElections@rilegislature.gov

Re: H-7995 – An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – The Office of the Elder Advocate

Dear Chairman Shanley:

I write today regarding H-7995 – An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – The Office of the Elder Advocate. Currently, the Office of Healthy Aging (OHA) is charged with providing for the health, safety, and welfare of older citizens, ensuring that older adults are better prepared and equipped to lead productive and meaningful lives. Additionally, OHA is the agency responsible for investigating reports of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect, and providing and/or coordinating protective services. Rhode Island General Laws §42-66-4 delineate the duties of OHA, many of which are duplicated by the proposed establishment of the Office of the Elder Advocate.

OHA delivers programs and services as charged by state statutes and under the Older Americans Act (OAA), the primary federal law in the United States authorizing home and community-based services for adults aged 60 and older. The OAA supports independence, dignity, and aging-in-place through nutrition programs, transportation, caregiver support, and elder rights services. The proposed purpose of the Office of the Elder Advocate references fragmentation of voices of older adults across agencies and programs. Creation of an additional state agency providing services and supports to older adults further fragments those voices and potentially dilutes issues of importance to aging Rhode Islanders.

OHA recognizes and raises the voices and needs of older Rhode Islanders in spaces of housing, behavioral health, transportation, nutrition, and other areas. We will continue to do so and look forward to working with the sponsor to ensure all older Rhode Islanders are empowered to live healthy, happy, safe and fulfilling lives. As always, I thank you for your partnership and consideration of this letter. Your leadership and advocacy for Rhode Island's older adults, adults living with disabilities, 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 State Government and Elections
The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel for the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy

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