



**RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE
OF CITIES AND TOWNS**

*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

March 19, 2026

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House State Government and Elections
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: HOUSE BILL 7995 – AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE OFFICE OF THE ELDER ADVOCATE

Chair Shanley and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, which represents the interests of all 39 cities and towns across the State, we write to express our support for House Bill 7995, which would establish the Office of the Elder Advocate to promote and protect the rights of older adults in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island's older adult population continues to grow. Currently, nearly 20% of Rhode Island residents are age 65 or older, and projections indicate that by 2030, roughly one in four Rhode Islanders will fall into this age group. Municipal leaders across the state are witnessing firsthand the rapid growth of this demographic. As residents age, they often face increasingly complex challenges related to housing, access to benefits, financial exploitation, guardianship, and navigating a variety of public and private service systems. While important protections currently exist, such as the Long-Term Care Ombudsman for individuals residing in licensed facilities, many older adults living independently in their homes and communities lack a centralized and independent resource dedicated to protecting their rights and ensuring their voices are heard.

House Bill 7995 would establish a dedicated Office of the Elder Advocate to address these gaps. By providing a place where older adults can bring concerns, receive assistance, and connect with appropriate services, the legislation would strengthen Rhode Island's ability to respond to the needs of this growing population. The office's responsibilities, including receiving complaints, advocating for systemic improvements in aging services, monitoring agency responsiveness, educating the public, and convening stakeholders, would help ensure that policies and programs affecting older residents are coordinated, transparent, and responsive.

For municipalities, the creation of this office would serve as an important partner in supporting older residents who rely on local services and community-based resources. Cities and towns often serve as the first point of contact for residents seeking help, whether through local housing offices, senior centers, public safety departments, or municipal social service programs. Establishing an Office of the Elder Advocate would provide municipalities with a valuable statewide resource to help address systemic challenges and connect residents with appropriate support while strengthening communication between state agencies, community organizations, and local governments.

Equally important, the Office of the Elder Advocate would help identify statewide trends and policy gaps affecting older adults across Rhode Island's diverse communities, from urban centers to suburban and rural municipalities. By producing annual reports and recommendations, the office would provide policymakers and local leaders with critical information to help improve services and protections for older residents throughout all 39 cities and towns.

Ensuring that older Rhode Islanders can live with dignity, independence, and security is a goal shared by state and local leaders alike. The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns believe that establishing the Office of the Elder Advocate represents a thoughtful step toward strengthening protections, improving coordination of services, and amplifying the voices of older adults across our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our perspective on House Bill 7995. We appreciate the opportunity to support this important initiative and stand ready to work with the General Assembly and stakeholders to ensure that Rhode Island continues to meet the needs of its growing senior population.

Sincerely,



Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House State Government and Elections Committee