



Testimony of Matt Netto, AARP Rhode Island
In support of House Bill 7542
House Health and Human Services Committee
March 12, 2026

Chairwoman Murray and Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

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 the creation of a Dementia Services Coordinator within the Department of Health as outlined in Representative Casimiro's House Bill 7542.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, nearly seven million Americans – and at least 24,000 Rhode Island residents – are currently living with Alzheimer's, and that figure is expected to reach 12.7 million nationally by 2050. There are many state-run programs and initiatives that are critical to individuals with dementia and their caregivers, including Medicaid, Statewide Respite Care Program, the Alzheimer's State Plan, and public health outreach related to early detection and diagnosis. Rhode Island needs to improve its service coordination across State agencies to meet the growing needs of individuals living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, as well as their caregivers.

Currently, 33 states have a state-funded Dementia Services Coordinator position. This coordinator position would allow the state to better evaluate the impact of its policy interventions, oversee the implementation and updating of the Alzheimer's State Plan, and provide a more person- and family-centered approach to the services it provides.

In conclusion, Rhode Island has been a leader in addressing the challenges of Alzheimer's and its impact on families. It is time to take the next step to prepare our state and health systems to continue to respond and lead nationally on this disease. We ask you to recommend the passage of this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt R. Netto".

Matt R. Netto

Associate State Director – Advocacy, AARP Rhode Island