



April 28, 20276

Dear Chair Donovan and Members, House HHS Committee,

I am pleased to extend my strong support for H8402 sponsored by Rep. Carson.

Rep. Carson has been chairing the Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations Pertaining to Services and Coordination of Programs Relating to Older Rhode Islanders (a.k.a. Carson Commission) since October 2023 when the Commission formed. The Commission, (I am a member), has heard from government and private and non-profit entities providing services and programs for older adults. It looked at the demographics of our older population, held several public meetings to get input from older adults and those who serve them and reviewed Master Plans on Aging from other states. And I acknowledge and thank Rep. Carson for her tireless work leading this important Commission.

Based on all the research done by the Commission and my extensive experience working on aging policy since serving as Director of the RI Department of Elderly Affairs in the early 1990's, I think creating the Joint Commission on Aging charged with development of a Master Plan on Aging for RI is critical as we approach 2030 and the continued growth of our older population. Already several communities have 30% or more of their population age 65 and over and 18 more have 65+ populations exceeding 20%.

This population shift in the age of the state population is unprecedented and demands attention at the highest levels of state government. Research done by the Carson Commission clearly documented the fragmentation that exists in providing services to older RIers along with gaps in services. The envisioned Master Plan on Aging would look at domains related to: housing, healthcare, transportation, economic security and municipal services. Based on that review it would establish goals, priorities and make recommendations relating to legislation and budgetary action for the Governor, legislators and municipal leaders.

Importantly, the Joint Commission would issue annual reports and require executive agencies to provide written responses to the annual report outlining actions (planned or taken) or providing reasons for non-implementation of recommendations. This is critical so legislators can track responses and demand accountability when laws are amended or adopted or budget adjustments are made.

Although the older population has grown substantially in the past decade, funding (with the exception of Medicaid payments for long term support and services) do not reflect the increase in need for community services that help all our older neighbors to live as healthily and economically secure as they deserve. Passage of H8402 provides a vehicle to make the changes need to make this a reality. To make this happen.

I respectfully urge the committee to pass H8402.

Sincerely,
Maureen Maigret, RN BS MPA
Policy Advisor, SACRI