



Testimony of Matthew Netto, AARP Rhode Island
In Support of Senate Bill 2686
Senate Health and Human Services Committee
April 7, 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 establishing the office of the elder advocate to promote the rights of older adults in Rhode Island as Senate Bill 2686 from Chairman McKenney intends to do.

AARP's mission is to empower adults to choose how to live as they age. This bill aims to do just that by creating an official branch of the state government to advocate for older adults and promote their rights and dignity. Rhode Island's long-term care ombudsman protects people in licensed facilities — but most older adults live in the community, not in nursing homes or assisted living. They currently have no statewide advocate. This bill closes that gap.

Many state agencies touch aging issues, but responsibilities are fragmented. The Elder Advocate becomes a central, independent voice to help promote rights, help families navigate complex systems, connect older adults with resources, and ensure agencies are accountable.

Senate Bill 2686 explicitly charges the office with finding places where older adults fall through the cracks and recommending improvements. Over time, that means more coordinated, more reliable, and more responsive services.

We appreciate this legislation's commitment to ensuring that the rights of older adults are advocated for throughout the state. AARP Rhode Island supports Senate Bill 2686 and asks you to recommend passage. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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

Matt Netto
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