



April 7th 2026

Senate Health and Human Services

**RE: Testimony SUPPORTING S2686**

Dear Chair Murray and Honorable Committee Members,

I am writing in my capacity as the State Long Term Care Ombudsman in strong support of legislation for S 2686 Office of the Elder Advocate. The creation of this position represents an important step in strengthening protections for older adults across Rhode Island, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) works every day to protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of residents living in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other long-term care settings. While our program plays a critical role in addressing issues within these facilities, there remain significant gaps in advocacy and oversight for older adults living in the community and in areas outside the LTCOP's statutory authority.

The establishment of an Elder Advocate would provide an important partner in addressing these gaps. The LTCOP and an Elder Advocate would work closely together on many issues impacting older adults, ensuring that the most vulnerable elders in our state have strong and consistent representation. In many instances, our programs would find ourselves aligned, working toward the same goal of protecting older adults from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and systemic failures.

One area where collaboration would be particularly important is guardianship. Guardianship issues continue to raise serious concerns regarding the protection of individual rights, due process, and oversight. Both the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and an Elder Advocate would likely be strong voices advocating for reforms and safeguards that protect older adults whether they reside in the community or in long term care facilities.

Importantly, the Elder Advocate would have the ability to address matters that fall outside the jurisdiction of the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. By doing so, this role would help close critical gaps in advocacy and oversight for older adults across Rhode Island. Together, these two entities could provide a more comprehensive system of protection and accountability for elders who often have limited ability to advocate for themselves.



For these reasons, I strongly support the creation of an Elder Advocate and believe it would significantly strengthen Rhode Island's ability to protect and advocate for older adults.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to the health and safety of Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,  
Lori Light  
Rhode Island State Long Term Care Ombudsman

