



Testimony of Matthew Netto, AARP Rhode Island

In support of House Bill 7063

House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing

January 25, 2024

Chairman Casey and Members of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing:

My name is Catherine Taylor, and I am the State Director of AARP Rhode Island. 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 creating a housing stock that can accommodate persons of all abilities, as House Bill 7063 from Representative Spears is intended to do.

According to the Rhode Island Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, in 2021, 26% of all Rhode Islanders and 39% of those 65 years old or older were living with a disability. We must work towards creating livable communities for Rhode Islanders of all ages and abilities. Accessible housing is an important part of a livable community that allows resident to age in place and that is why AARP supports House Bill 7063.

This bill provides that all new construction for low- and moderate-income housing be constructed using the principles of universal design. Universal Design is an approach to home building, remodeling, and community development that centers on safety and ease of movement both inside and outside of the home. It accommodates the mobility needs of all residents and allows older adults to age at home and in their communities where they have strong social networks and a sense of familiarity. By 2030, the 65+ population is expected to account for nearly 20 percent of the entire U.S. population, which means our housing stock needs to change to accommodate our aging population.

According to AARP Rhode Island's November 2023 Vital Voices Survey the majority (85%) of Rhode Island residents age 45+ think that it is extremely or very important for them to be able to stay in their own home as they get older. The 2021 AARP Community Preference Survey showed that most older adults in the U.S. (79%) own their own homes and about half have paid off their mortgage. The survey indicates about three-quarters of those 50+ would like to stay in their current homes or communities for as long as possible. We must increase our accessible housing stock so that aging in place is a reality for Rhode Islanders of all abilities.

House Bill 7063 is a great bill that will help to provide livable communities for all Rhode Islanders. We ask that you recommend passage. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Catherine Taylor, AARP RI, State Director