



Testimony of Catherine Taylor, AARP Rhode Island
In support of House Bill 7565
House Committee on State Government and Elections
January 25, 2024

Chairman Shanley and Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections:

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 allowing remote participation in open public meetings of the Long-term Care Coordinating Council and establishing that a quorum of the council consists of 12 members, as House Bill 7565 from Representative Messier intends to do.

House Bill 7565, if passed, would significantly improve the Council's ability to develop and coordinate state policy concerning all forms of long-term health care for seniors and adults with chronic disabilities and illnesses.

The Long-term Care Coordinating Council is a public body tasked with providing state policymakers, including the House of Representatives, with information and recommendations on how our state can best serve our constituents who require significant care for chronic conditions. Statutorily, members are not able to participate remotely. This requirement makes it difficult for members to participate, especially those who are unable to travel to a meeting due to long term care issues of their own. By passing this bill, we can lift that requirement and ensure that representatives of the people the Council is meant to serve are able to fully participate in the meeting.

As structured, the Council requires an in-person meeting of 33 stakeholders from across the state, of which 17 members are needed to form a quorum. Because this is a meeting of a wide variety of stakeholders, including state officials, nonprofit leaders, working healthcare professionals, and consumers of the health services the council oversees, scheduling meetings around a quorum is a challenge. In turn, the progress of the Council is sometimes hampered when we are unable to approve minutes or take votes. This bill would bring the quorum requirement of the Council in line with other policy councils managed by the Lieutenant Governor, such the Emergency Management Advisory Council, and allow us to work more effectively.

The small changes proposed in this bill would, if enacted, have a large impact in our state's ability to develop and implement policies that would serve Rhode Island's long term care community. I strongly urge you to recommend passage of House Bill 7565 as introduced so that our Council can get to work on their behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Catherine Taylor, AARP RI, State Director