



April 14, 2025

Senator Patricia Jehlen, Chair  
Committee on Aging and Independence  
24 Beacon Street, Room 424  
Boston, 02133

Chairman Thomas Stanley  
Committee on Aging and Independence  
24 Beacon Street, Room 167  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs Jehlen and Stanley and Members of the Aging and Independence Committee,

I am submitting this testimony in support of **S765/H487** "*An Act Relative to Councils on Aging*". I want to thank Representative Donaghue and Senator Montigny for their leadership on this legislation which will certainly provide a much-needed update to the Council on Aging Statute.

I am the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging, the nonprofit membership association of the **350** Municipal councils on aging and senior centers in the Commonwealth, serving all of your districts, who support the 1.7 million older adults in Mass in leading healthy and purposeful lives.

The purpose of this bill to amend Section 8B of Chapter 40 of the General Laws is twofold; first to amend outdated and ageist terminology and second, is to update language which does not reflect the current construct of the majority of Council on Aging Boards.

Since the statute establishing Councils on Aging was passed in 1956, the Councils have grown to fall into two categories – supervisory and advisory. The current statute states the "**The Council** may appoint...", which only reflects the constructs where the Council on Aging (appointed board members) has supervisory/hiring capacity, (approximately 6 COAs); whereas over the last 60 years the majority of Councils on Aging (their Boards) shifted to become "Advisory", as **municipalities** built senior centers and created Senior Center/Council on Aging Director positions, and other support staff positions for their Council on Aging **departments**.

As you see in the bill, the proposed language change reflects both constructs, thus allowing both, providing the capacity for the municipality, (Senior Center Director or Town HR dept.) to hire staff, whereas **without** the additional language only the "Council" is allowed to hire.

Issues with the outdated statute were brought to our attention two and a half years ago when the town of Sherborn, after having submitted and received approval through **town meeting** of a warrant article to change their Council on Aging Bylaws, was notified by the AG's office that the warrant article was "disapproved". The AG stated they "disapproved" the warrant article text that authorized the Director, rather than the "Council on Aging", to "hire all other staff positions for the Council on Aging" because it was in conflict with chapter 40, section 8B.

I want to urge the Committee to support **S487/H765** and give this bill a favorable report so that all COA's can continue their work and provide the much-needed services within the definition in the statute, and Senior Center Directors can continue to run their centers without the risk of being in conflict with the state statute.

If you have any questions regarding the bill, please contact me or Nomita Ganguly at 781-354-2444.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth H. Connell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear, legible font.

Elizabeth H. Connell  
Executive Director

Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging