

Senior Agenda Coalition of Rhode Island's position on the proposed renaming of Office of Healthy Aging to Department of Healthy Aging

See: H-[7616](#) AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DEPARTMENT OF HEALTHY AGING (Renames the Office of Healthy Aging to The Department of Healthy Aging, restructures the administration and delivery of services, and expands the authority of its director in various ways.)

3/21/2022

To whom it may concern:

Senior Agenda Coalition of Rhode Island strongly supports any and all efforts that increase the state's programs and services to address the growing needs of our aging population, especially those with low and moderate incomes. Senior Agenda Coalition of RI supports the reinstatement of OHA to a full department, ***but not without the commensurate expansion of funding and services that are needed for this important state government function.*** Rhode Island's 65 years and older age cohort is one of the fastest growing in the country. By 2025, according to RI Statewide Planning, we will have 220,000 older residents in this age group, 67,000 more than in 2010, representing an average annual growth of 3.5% per year.

When the Department of Elderly Affairs was reorganized to be a division of the Department of Human Services, we were concerned that it signified a diminishing of the importance of senior needs in the state budget. While from a management perspective, the division within the larger Department of Human Services could streamline the delivery of services, there would still be the need to increase staffing and programs to meet the growing needs. That did not happen in the ensuing years. Restoring the Office of Healthy Aging to a department status will strengthen its position at the budget table and elevate the importance of programs supporting older residents of our state. We hope that will make a difference

Bernie Beaudreau, Exec. Dir. Senior Agenda Coalition of RI