Catherine Taylor
State Director, AARP Rhode Island
10 Orms Street, #200
Providence, Rhode Island 02904

June 2, 2021

Dear Ms. Taylor,

In my capacity as Town Council Liaison to the Westerly Hospital, I submit this letter of support for the Age Friendly Initiative in our Westerly. Thanks largely to the work of Laurel Holmes, we have an ongoing commitment to an age-friendly community; much work has been done in this area already. However, as a next step, we look forward to joining AARP’s Age-Friendly Communities network.

Specifically, in the Fall of 2019, based on data that was collated and completed by the Hospital’s Community Health Needs Assessment, the Westerly Age Friendly Committee was formed under the leadership of Ms. Holmes. The Committee has a diverse group of representatives from organizations based not only in Westerly but across Rhode Island. The Assessment is being updated and will definitely include a focus on data that reflects community conditions for our older residents.

Through information provided by this work, a Community Plan has been developed, framed along the AARP Domains of Livability, and with additional input by older residents during community meetings. Indeed, portions of the plan have already been brought to life and there is a feeling of true progress. Additionally, you should know that the plan is revised and evaluated when there is new data or new ideas and/or issues are put forward.

To highlight just a few of the accomplishments to date:

- development of a public education campaign including seven Public Service Announcements on issues of concern to an older demographic, currently being broadcast on local television;

- launch of efforts around housing for older residents including the start of a Westerly Village to support those residents seeking to “age in place;”

- ongoing exploration with the R.I. Public Transit Authority on how to augment transportation options for older residents;

- community conversations to encourage social interaction, hosted by partners such as the Westerly Public Library, the Westerly Senior Center and the Westerly Housing Authority; and

- inclusion of older residents in the planning and implementation of all of the above initiatives and the intent to continue with their hands on participation.
In closing, it is fair to say that we look forward to continuing the work with the AARP R.I. staff, and with you in particular. It is in the best interests of older residents, their families and the entire community of Westerly that we do everything we practically can to support the Town as a great place to live at whatever age, but particularly as we, our family members and our neighbors become older.

Sincerely,

Sharon E. Ahern
Chair, Westerly Town Council