



## Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Ashley G. O'Shea - EOHHS

O: 401-462-6394

C: 401-318-1228

[ashley.g.oshea@ohhs.ri.gov](mailto:ashley.g.oshea@ohhs.ri.gov)

### **Governor Raimondo Announces Community Conversations on Caring for Seniors and Disabled Rhode Islanders**

**WOONSOCKET, RI (May 29, 2018)** – Last week, Governor Gina M. Raimondo, joined by state and municipal leaders and community advocates, announced a series of community conversations on caring for seniors and Rhode Islanders with disabilities at PACE Rhode Island in Woonsocket.

Rhode Island's senior population is growing rapidly. According to recent estimates, by 2030, one out of every four residents will be 65 or older. Many of Rhode Island's seniors receive services through the state's long-term care system. Similarly, many Rhode Islanders with disabilities are served by this system, which has historically been oriented toward institutional care. Over the last three years, the state has begun to shift toward a community-based model, closing sheltered workshops and group homes and increasing support for senior centers, community meal programs, and other supportive services.

"All Rhode Islanders deserve an opportunity to design and live a fulfilling life," said Governor Gina M. Raimondo. "They deserve the peace of mind that when needed, support will be there. We've made some headway in improving our system of care for seniors and those with disabilities. But we need to do more to promote independence, health, and meaningful connections to the community. We need to take bold, transformative action. I look forward to the ideas and new partnerships that will come out of these sessions."

As part of the effort to transform the state's long-term care system, Governor Raimondo is launching a multi-phased effort to engage Rhode Islanders in designing the system of the future – one that puts people first and includes a diverse array of services and supports. In the first phase, which kicks off next month, a series of community listening sessions will be held around the state. Input from these sessions will guide development of formal workgroups later this year and an actionable vision for long-term services and supports in Rhode Island.

"Our goal is to be there for Rhode Islanders when they need us; that is our mission every day," said Health and Human Services Secretary Eric J. Beane. "We don't do it alone. Community advocates, caregivers, and our partners in government and industry play important roles in promoting quality care and helping people to live rich, fulfilling lives. We must continue to take a thoughtful approach and work together to strengthen and invest in our system. That means putting people first, taking a holistic view, and defining a path forward that leads to improved care and outcomes for Rhode Islanders. I look forward to meeting with consumers and caregivers through these sessions and learning more about their experiences."

"The work of my agency is centered around core principles - empowering seniors, preserving independence, and enriching lives," said Elderly Affairs Director Charles J. Fogarty. "After many years of declining funding for senior services under prior administrations, Governor Raimondo stepped up to the plate and made

supporting local senior centers a top priority, fully funded Meals on Wheels, and has embraced the importance of home- and community-based support services.”

“We are committed to ensuring that elders and individuals with disabilities have an accommodating support system with the ability to remain as independent as they wish,” said Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals Director Rebecca Boss. “We want those who need assistance to have easy access to direct support workers, transportation and community-based supports to live their best life.”

The first community conversation will be at the South Kingstown Senior Center, 25 St. Dominic Road, in Wakefield on Thursday, June 14, 2018 at 11:00 a.m.

###