

## [Mixed Review For Elder Affairs Name Change](#)

### State House News

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By Alison Kuznitz

Lawmakers and some senior care advocates voiced support Wednesday for Gov. Maura Healey's proposal to [rename the Executive Office of Elder Affairs](#), agreeing with administration officials that the change could reduce stigma for older Bay Staters and help them to better access state resources.

[Healey's bill](#) (S 2797), filed at the end of May, would change the office's name to the Executive Office of Aging and Independence, and is based on research that the administration says shows that older residents do not resonate with the term "elder" and that they value their independence and self-determination.

Rep. Antonio Cabral, co-chair of the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight, said the proposed name is "much better" and "appropriate." During a hearing Wednesday, he signaled the legislation could be a starting point for potentially restructuring the office, which is not an independent secretariat and is currently housed under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

"Do you think or do you believe that the next step after changing the name should be a conversation about is it appropriate for the secretariat to continue as it is, or should it be one that is independent of HHS, such because the aging community is growing by the day with Baby Boomers, right?" Cabral asked Elizabeth Connell, executive director of the Massachusetts Councils on Aging.

Connell said "everyone in the aging network" has discussed elevating the secretariat.

"I think we'd be really happy to have further discussions about that, what that could bring to the table in terms of the increase in the population of older adults now being about almost 24 percent of the state's population," she said.

Paul Lanzikos, co-founder of Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, said the advocacy group is "agnostic" to the rename, adding that some members like Healey's pitch while others want to keep the status quo. A former elders affairs secretary in the Dukakis administration, Lanzikos urged lawmakers to think more broadly about reshaping the work of the office.

"There was a time when the executive office was viewed as one of the preeminent state agencies in the country focused on the needs and interests of older adults," Lanzikos said. "While properly seen today as a very competent line agency -- and it is, and it has a very vital role -- its role as a significant participant in public policymaking at the Cabinet-level in a range of critical areas, such as you've already indicated, Mr. Chairman, housing, transportation, economic development, workforce and the like has diminished."