

# elder voice

## ADVOCATES

Madam Chair and members of the committee, I am Kris Sundberg, the Executive Director and a founding member of Elder Voice Advocates and Elder Care IQ. In our advocacy work, we have learned how pervasive the challenges are to age safely in communities of our choosing.

The crisis, for our rapidly aging citizens, is at the breaking point on many fronts. We must act now.

For the first time, this Task Force will take a take a wholistic review of the entire spectrum of age related issues. Our current, fragmented approach, has evolved over the years to address one set of issues at a time, rather than by an all-inclusive plan. This has resulted in the present challenges for elders to access affordable housing and health care, transportation, trained work force, caregiver support, state and local support services, and quality care in long-term care residences.

Elder Voice Advocates sent out a notice regarding this bill to hundreds of our supporters and members throughout the state. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Here are a couple of examples of what they had to say.

Fran Levings, from New Dosey Township in northern Minnesota, is Vice Chair of the North Pine Area Hospital District states the following. "This Task Force on Aging is critically important to rural seniors. Pine County's older residents are lower income and they struggle to pay for food, keep up their homes, find transportation to doctors' appointments, find home health care services, get access to reliable broadband and much more. Over 22% of the Pine County residents are 65 years or older, nearly 11% live in poverty, and many need to drive at least 30 miles to get food, health care and other services. We as a Hospital District are very limited in our authority to adequately help our senior citizens. A statewide plan is so important for every rural citizen."

Tony Wagner, Nancy Jorgenson, and other residents of a suburban independent living apartment organized to fight a rent increase. They were able to pressure the management to lower the proposed 14% rent increase to 9 %. But Tony says, "we remain very concerned that rents will continue to rise at alarming rates." Putting more pressure on Tony resulted from an increase of \$800/month for his wife's memory care. He further states that "our ability to pay for these increases has diminished greatly in the past year."

We also talk to many family caregivers who are struggling to help an aging relative, manage the needs of their children while trying to work a full time job. Their options are few and often result in quitting a job to take care of their elder loved one. And let's not forget the staff who are often over-worked, under-paid and poorly trained.

Please support this much needed work. Today's and tomorrow's elders are depending on your leadership and action. Remember, 'we are all elders in training.' Thank you so much.

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