

# elder voice

## ADVOCATES

### **In Support of the MN Legislative Task Force on Aging HF 979 and SF 1022**

*A bill to establish a task force to examine aging in Minnesota, design a Statewide Plan, and make recommendations for a governmental entity to execute the Plan; ensure that all aging related policies are inclusive of Minnesotans whose race, ethnicity, culture, geography, sexual orientation, abilities, and other characteristics reflect the full population of the state.*

#### **Why is a Legislative Task Force on Aging necessary?**

The Legislative Task Force is necessary to:

- conduct a public review of aging with people across Minnesota to examine priorities that support aging in their communities,
- recommend a statewide plan of action, legislative proposals, and an entity such as an agency or office to implement those policies for aging in communities across Minnesota, and
- recommend private and public investments throughout the state to build and sustain a supported infrastructure for safe and affordable housing options, transit, health care, and local community-based resources for aging.

#### **Our state must address wide disparities in our demographics, our increasing aging adult population and our decreasing population of caregivers**

The Minnesota State Demographer projected Minnesota's population of persons aged 65+ will reach 1 million this year, 2023. Projections show a 300,000 increase in adults over the age of seventy-five in seven years - in 2030. While the largest concentration of those 65+ are in the seven-county metro area, *the highest percentage of older adults live in Greater Minnesota*. This demographic shift leads to challenges and potential solutions/financial opportunities for: financial insecurity, limited housing options, insufficient transportation, limited access to necessary health care and long-term care, necessary employment, and community services for both populations – older and younger adults. [State Demographer Report 2/8/22](#)

To date, Minnesota's focus on aging has been on aging deficits rather than assets. This led to rapid growth of assisted living facilities but lack of a coherent plan for a delivery system facing an increasing demand for providers of long-term care. No specific state department or agency is accountable to implement and monitor the numerous reports and recommendations on this issue since the *Aging Initiative-Project 2030* program was published over 25 years ago: "...to understand the demographic trends and how those trends impact future older Minnesotans and their communities." <https://mn.gov/dhs/mn2030/background/>

As our communities age and workforce challenges continue particularly in Greater Minnesota, demand for safe and affordable housing, home modifications, quality care and supports will not

be met for this rapidly growing population. The Legislative Task Force on Aging will hear the specific concerns about aging in Minnesota and recommend legislative proposals for an infrastructure for aging in community.

### **Our state must plan an infrastructure for aging through local economic development**

The Legislative Task Force on Aging will propose a course of action *across generations* to ensure that an aging population will not lead to social isolation, poverty, declining health, and poor economic well-being for communities. Strategies to encourage local economic development opportunities for communities could include policies that encourage:

- redesign of local zoning in cities' infrastructure (housing options, transit) for healthy aging,
- incentives for business and philanthropic support,
- purchasing options for products and services that generate economic activity,
- financial support for multigenerational initiatives to encourage community development.

An economic development model for aging would include private and public partnerships that attract long-term investments in time, attention, and resources across our state. In a "longevity economy" we have opportunities to create jobs for both younger and aging populations:

- Minnesota's 50+ population is responsible for 57 cents of every dollar spent in Minnesota and expected to grow to 62 cents by 2050 (AARP The Longevity Economy Minnesota 2018)
- Median income of \$54,800 for MN Baby Boomer households (age 65 to 74 years)
- Seniors bring over 12 billion dollars into our state's economy every year.
- Over half of us live in the seven county metropolitan area. Of the other half, most live in just two regions, central and southern Minnesota.
- We are the fastest growing demographic experiencing homelessness.
- We vote in higher percentages of population than any other age group in the state. As many as 85% of us at a certain point in our lives.
- We are a huge volunteer workforce - currently 39% of us volunteer- we are a volunteer workforce of 372,340 people.

Note: data excerpt from: Demographic data source from *Aging in Minnesota Fact Sheet 2022* by Ann Bussey, MA, Community Healthy Aging Advocate (abussey6824@gmail.com) University of Minnesota Project Reach, March, 2022. References available upon request abussey6824@gmail.com

### **Our state must take statewide action to reach "scale"**

The Legislative Task Force on Aging is a first step toward a multi-year Minnesota Statewide Plan for Aging with a governmental entity that is accountable for implementation to:

- operationalize the Statewide Plan,
- engage all regions of the state,
- coordinate actions across branches of government and private sector,
- raise the visibility of the aging life experiences across our state,
- promote innovations in local economic development,
- ensure elder rights protections and personal privacy in all care settings and communities.

To be successful, statewide action for Minnesota must reach scale with statewide participation and every system that supports community life as we age.