

elder voice

ADVOCATES

February 28, 2023

To: MN Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Committee

Fr: Kathleen Kelso, member of Elder Voice Advocates Policy Committee

Re: Support for HF 979/SF 1022

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee, we ask for your support of SF1022 because we are all aging. Where will you choose to live as you age? How do you want to live as you age? Research confirms that the majority of people would choose to remain in their own community, their own neighborhood as they age. Not “aging in place” - in isolation - but in a *community* of their choice. Increasingly today, this is no longer feasible for aging Minnesotans.

This Legislative Task Force is necessary to:

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

The Minnesota State Demographer projected Minnesota’s population of persons aged 65+ will reach over 1 million this year, 2023. Projections indicate a 300,000 increase in adults over the age of seventy-five in the next seven years - by 2030. While the largest concentration of people age 65+ are in the seven-county metro area, *the highest percentage of older adults live in Greater Minnesota.*

The Legislative Task Force on Aging will propose a course of action to assist cities, counties and the private sector to build an infrastructure for our aging population to prevent social isolation, declining health, and poor economic well-being within our communities. Strategies to encourage local economic development opportunities for communities could include:

- redesign in city zoning for housing options to encourage aging in community,
- incentives for business and philanthropic support to support aging in community,
- purchasing options for products and services that generate economic activity,
- financial support for multigenerational initiatives to encourage community development.

Our state requires an economic development model for aging that 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 and a responsibility to incentivize businesses and job creation that supports aging in community as we all age.

The Legislative Task Force on Aging is a first step toward a multi-year Minnesota Statewide Plan for Aging - which to be successful - must reach scale with statewide participation and with every system that supports community life as we age.