

## Task Force on Aging Position Statement

Minneapolis Regional Retirees Council, MRLF, AFL-CIO  
Minnesota State Retirees Council, AFL-CIO  
Minnesota AFL-CIO  
AFSCME Retirees Chapter West Metro  
DFL Senior Caucus  
Minnesota State Council of Machinists Retirees  
Elder Voice Advocates  
Elders United for Social Justice  
St Paul Regional Retirees Council, StPRLF, AFL-CIO

We support the Task Force on Aging legislation. The current needs of the growing senior population are stressing our current programs and infrastructure. We are totally ill equipped to handle the needs of the rapidly growing population of seniors. It is important that we plan equitably for the human right to be free of ageism and receive the support necessary to live our lives with dignity and quality resources. We also have concerns, which we hope you will take seriously.

### **Bill Summary** (HF 979 – Rep. Ginny Klevorn and SF 1022 – Senator Kelly Morrison)

A Legislative Task Force on Aging will examine our aging demographic, make policy recommendations for building an infrastructure to provide for our rapidly aging population, and determine a governmental entity to lead and execute a Statewide Plan for Aging Minnesotans. A Legislative Task Force is a first step toward the planning and implementation through a designated office or preferability, a department on aging that would be accountable to all Minnesotans.

This is necessary because we require a *statewide, MN Plan for Aging* and an official entity that will drive fundamental change in how we care for and support current and future seniors and Minnesota families.

### **A Looming Crisis**

**Rapidly growing aging population** - The MN state demographer has projected that:

- The elder population in MN of over 65 years in 2021 was 956,000, eclipsing the K – 12 population of over 870,000 in 2021 – 2022.
- Seniors make up 17% of the population.
- MN will reach a milestone in 2023: 1 million people will be over the age of 65.
- In the next 7 years, 300,000 Minnesotans will be over the age of 75.

### **Rural areas have more older adults & challenges**

- Greater Minnesota (geographic area outside the Twin Cities metro area) is home to a larger share of older adults, 482,026 to 466,815.
- Minnesota towns and rural communities aging faster, with more older adults than school age children prior to 2020, with rural aging trends continuing into the future
- Rural realities of distance, transportation challenges, financial constraints, poor housing and outdated built environments, diminished healthcare access, limited access to internet and connectivity are barriers to successful aging (Henning-Smith, C., 2021)

### **Most live in their home**

- Over 90% of older adults live independently in Minnesota communities
- 21% of the 90% community older adults receive community supports and services funded through the Older Americans Act and state legislature (MN Board on Aging Report, 2019)
- 7% of MN older adults live in congregate settings--2.5% in Long-term Care and 4.5% in Assisted Living settings (Genworth Cost of Care, 2019; AHCA National Center for Assisted Living)

## **Seniors Vote**

*Minnesota leads the national older adult voter rate at 78%; older adults are more likely to vote than other demographic groups (Brandon, E., 2020)*

## **Seniors are an economic force**

- 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)
- Economic impact of \$154 billion to the state GDP, 1.7 million jobs, \$111 billion in wages, and state and local taxes of \$14 billion (AARP, The Longevity Economy, 2018)
- U.S. economic impact of the 50+ population (2020-2050) is 3<sup>rd</sup> largest economy in the world GDP--\$8.3 trillion (2018), \$12.6 trillion (2030), \$18.4 trillion (2040), and \$26.8 trillion (2050)
- We bring over 12 billion dollars into our state's economy every year.
- There are more than two of us for every veteran in the state.
- There are 955,683 of us in Minnesota - by 2033 one out every five people will be one of us.
- 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.
- 46% of households in Minnesota have a family member providing childcare - of these we are over half.

**Note:** 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

## **Currently a Fragmented Approach to Senior Issues**

Minnesota currently has at least 10 state agencies/departments with a substantial piece of elder services and policy work. [MN Board on Aging, Attorney General, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, MN Statewide Independent Living Council, Board of Examiners for Nursing Home Administrators, Board of Nursing, Office of Health Facilities Complaints, Ombudsman for Long Term Care ,and the University of MN]

None of them are planning for the rapidly growing elder population and evaluating the infrastructure and support services that will be needed. Our state is woefully unprepared.

## **Seniors Currently Struggle with Many Issues.**

- Affordable housing is getting more challenging with rent and property tax increases.
- Adequate transportation contributes to isolation and inability to get to basic services.
- Quality home care options are needed to enable staying in our homes.
- Long-term care facilities are understaffed and creating a significant care crisis that is resulting in needless suffering and premature death.
- Inflation is impacting our available income to meet our basic living expenses.
- Rural areas are impacted with inadequate infrastructure and services to meet the needs.

**Thank you for taking this leadership approach to a looming aging crisis and please seriously consider remedies to our concerns.**

## **Addendum**

### **Other state examples (from the MN Board on Aging)**

Other states are moving toward comprehensive planning efforts to address the ongoing demographic changes:

#### **Colorado**

In Colorado, understanding that quality, replicable data is essential to understanding long-term progress, needs and opportunities in the aging community. The State of Aging in Colorado has begun to develop a useful and powerful database. <https://www.bellpolicy.org/2021/12/01/state-of-aging-in-colorado/>

#### **California**

California's Master Plan (MPA) released on January 6 bold goals and twenty-three strategies to build a California for All Ages by 2030...This is , 2021, "the MPA outlines five not a plan simply for today's older adults. Instead, the Master Plan is a blueprint for aging across the lifespan. The Master Plan calls on all California communities to build a California for All Ages: for older Californians currently living through the many different stages of the second half of life; for younger generations who can expect to live longer lives than their elders; for communities of all ages – family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and caregivers – surrounding older adults." <https://mpa.aging.ca.gov/>

#### **Illinois** March 8, 2022

The MISSION of the Illinois Department on Aging is to serve and advocate for older Illinoisans and their caregivers by administering quality and culturally appropriate programs that promote partnerships and encourage independence, dignity, and quality of life."

[https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/AboutUs/Documents/Org\\_Chart.pdf](https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/AboutUs/Documents/Org_Chart.pdf)

#### **Ohio**

We are a cabinet-level state agency. Our director is appointed by the governor. The U.S. Administration for Community Living designated us as Ohio's lead agency for Older Americans Act services. The Ohio Department of Medicaid contracts with us to administer certain Medicaid program