



April 15, 2024

To: Chair Dziedzic and Members of the Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Committee

From: Cathy McLeer, AARP State Director

Re: Senator Portman' Amendment (SF 4254-a-2 amendment) Expansion of Affordable Housing Options

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On behalf of our 620,000 members, AARP is writing in support of Senator Portman's legislation, (SF 4254-a2), that expands affordable housing options by allowing multifamily by right in commercially zoned areas.

With the number of Americans over the age of 65 expected to more than double from 40 million to 81 million by 2040, it is paramount that policymakers work to maintain and create housing options that meet the needs of older adults and facilitate aging in place. In Minnesota, the number of older adults turning 65 in this decade will be greater than in the past four decades combined, undoubtedly impacting housing needs.

Surveys by AARP show that most Americans, including older adults, prefer to live in walkable neighborhoods that offer a mix of housing and transportation options that are close to jobs, schools, shopping, entertainment, and green spaces. Allowing multifamily buildings by right in commercial spaces, including senior housing, will be a key step in the right direction.

When multifamily projects, especially those offering affordable units that can appeal to lower-income seniors, are delayed or halted by current city approval processes, older Minnesotans lose the chance to live where they want. By allowing the development of these projects "by right", SF4254-a2 amendment will greatly assist in increasing much-needed supply. Furthermore, such housing can also help revitalize commercial districts, as more businesses catering to the residents in the district can be started, and it has more potential to create a more livable community.

Finally, while this key zoning allows for more middle housing, we would also request that lawmakers provide cities and towns with additional incentives and support, including tax credits to affordable housing developers, technical assistance to cities and towns to implement such zoning changes, and providing a reasonable timeline for cities and municipalities to implement such changes.

Senator Portman's amendment can help communities provide age-friendly housing and transportation options; access to needed services; and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life. Thank you for considering this important legislation.

If you have questions please get in touch with Mary Jo George, Associate State Director at [mgeorge@aarp.org](mailto:mgeorge@aarp.org) or 651-271-6586.