



**AARP Testimony in Opposition to SF 2224
Senate Human Services Committee
March 19, 2025**

Chair Klein and Committee Members,

I am writing to express AARP's opposition to SF 2224, which would relieve phone companies from their obligation to provide basic phone service to customers in certain areas. This bill would disproportionately harm older Minnesotans, many of whom rely on traditional phone services for communication and emergency assistance.

The bill's assumption that VOIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) availability as shown on an FCC map is an effective proxy for basic phone service is simply unrealistic. Many older adults do not have reliable internet access and, even if they do, VOIP can often be more expensive, complicated to set up, and prone to service disruptions.

Additionally, the bill is based on an FCC VOIP map that is flawed, and it does not accurately reflect the gaps in service availability across all communities. Removing the obligation to serve based on this flawed map may leave many people, particularly those in rural or underserved areas, without any means of reliable phone service.

Perhaps most concerning of all is the impact on public safety. A basic phone line is a critical lifeline during emergencies, and eliminating this service would endanger vulnerable individuals who may not have access to alternative means of communication. SF 2224 can pose a significant risk to public health and safety, particularly for those who rely on phones for emergencies, doctor appointments, and staying connected with family members.

Any change in obligation to serve should be based on an investigation of relevant evidence by Public Utilities Commission and interested stakeholders with the burden of proof on incumbent phone companies to demonstrate there are affordable reliable alternatives. Public comment hearings could be held in the affected communities.

For these reasons, I urge you, on behalf of our more than 620,000 members statewide, to reconsider the impact of this bill and protect the right to basic phone service for all, especially for those who are most vulnerable. Thank you!

Thomas Elness
State Advocacy Director
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