



Minnesota Board on Aging
PO Box 64976
St. Paul, MN 55164-0976

April 2, 2025

Dear Chair Schomacker, Chair Noor, and Human Services Committee members,

On behalf of the MN Board on Aging (MBA), I am writing in support of HF 2646 for the continuation of the Age-Friendly MN Council (AFMN). Since its inception, AFMN has partnered closely with the MBA and its work is embedded throughout the FFY 2024-2027 State Plan on Aging developed and implemented by the MBA, which states the following:

“(AFMN) is a collaborative statewide effort to make our systems and communities more inclusive of and responsive to older adults. The AFMN Council’s members include leadership from nine state agencies and representatives from greater Minnesota, age-friendly and faith communities, and Tribal Nations. One of its key efforts is developing the state’s first *Multi-Sector Blueprint for an Age-Friendly Minnesota*, which is envisioned as a cross-sector plan that engages and coordinates the work of a range of partners, old and new, related to aging.

As one of the member state agencies, the Minnesota Board on Aging plays a critical role in advancing the vision of an Age-Friendly MN. This State Plan on Aging includes several strategies that involve partnering with AFMN, as well as others that are aligned with our shared goals. These goals encompass a range of important objectives, including promoting equity and reducing disparities, fostering coordination among state agencies, and creating livable communities that cater to the needs of Minnesotans at every stage of life.”

AFMN is a crucial, innovative component of the aging network in Minnesota. It is also part of a global movement preparing for an aging population by ensuring older people are valued and fully integrated into our communities and recognized for our contributions where we live.

We appreciate your support of HF 2646 to create a supportive and inclusive society in Minnesota where aging is celebrated, services are accessible, and older people actively shape policies to ensure we can all thrive as we age.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Maureen Schneider'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Maureen Schneider
Chair, Minnesota Board on Aging



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF
AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

March 28, 2025

Minnesota House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee
Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Age-Friendly Minnesota Council – Support of HF 2646

Chair Schomacker, Chair Noor and members of the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee,

The Minnesota Association of Area Agencies on Aging (m4a) supports House File 2646 to convert the Governor’s Council on an Age-Friendly MN into the Age-Friendly MN Council. The Council with the support of the Minnesota Board on Aging and the support of the commissioners of commerce, economic development, health, housing, human services, transportation, veteran’s affairs and the Metropolitan Council can take Age-Friendly work to the next level. We are writing in support of the Age Friendly Council plan that will:

- Raise-up the voice of older adults in developing an Age-Friendly state.
- Engage community members, caregivers & other stakeholders in this work.
- Identify opportunities and barriers through collaborative efforts.
- Elevate Age-Friendly work at a local level – creating change in communities.
- Develop Age-Friendly community grants to support cities/others in the state.
- Coordinate Age-Friendly technical assistance grants to support communities.

The MN Area Agencies on Aging (m4a) are fully committed to this effort and have faith that the MN Department of Human Services will be good stewards of funding awarded to them and offer sound administrative support to the Age-Friendly Minnesota Council.

Best Regards,

Handwritten signature of Rebecca Sash in blue ink.

Rebecca Sash, Director, Arrowhead Agency on Aging

Handwritten signature of Lori Vrolson in blue ink.

Lori Vrolson, Executive Director, Central Minnesota Council on Aging

Handwritten signature of Heather Pender in blue ink.

Heather Pender, Director, Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging

Handwritten signature of Dawn Simonson in blue ink.

Dawn Simonson, President and CEO, Trellis, Metro Region Area Agency on Aging

Handwritten signature of Laurie Brownell in blue ink.

Laurie Brownell, Director, Southeastern Minnesota Area Agency on Aging

Handwritten signature of Jason Swanson in blue ink.

Jason Swanson, Executive Director, Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging

March 28, 2025



The Honorable Joe Schomacker
Minnesota State Representative
Minnesota House of Representatives
Centennial Office Building, 2nd floor
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Schomacker,

On behalf of the undersigned Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging members, I write today with our full support for HF 2646 to keep the Age-Friendly Minnesota Council in place. We have broad consensus of the major organizations across the aging sector to support this crucial and cost-effective group's collaborative work. This bill ensures the basic infrastructure needed to coordinate the collective strengths of our state agencies, non-profit community partners, and other community voices. *But to be clear, without legislative action this year, this essential work will end.*

The Age-Friendly Minnesota Council empowers local solutions by administering a highly valued and competitive community grants program. They also coordinate collaborative work advancing *Minnesota's Multisector Blueprint for Aging* – a 10-year plan and significant collaborative effort shaped by thousands of community voices. They address priority policies, systems, and programs to meet our collective needs for transportation, affordable housing options, enhanced community spaces, stronger intergenerational connections, access to quality health services, and more.

We are committed to supporting this legislation and the ongoing work to ensure the Age-Friendly Minnesota Council remains a valued commitment to our shared future. Please contact me directly at adam@mnlcoa.org with any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Suomala". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Adam Suomala
Executive Director

Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging

PO Box 4636, St. Paul, MN 55104
651-271-3116
mnlcoa.org

***Uniting leaders to advance
equitable opportunities for
all Minnesotans as we age.***

Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging
Delegates Supporting HF 2646

- Cathy McLeer, *State Director*, **AARP Minnesota**
- Robert Freeman, *Vice President, Public Policy*, **Alzheimer's Association MN-ND**
- Kimelyn Knight, *Director of Aging Services*, **Amherst H. Wilder Foundation**
- Mary Niedermeyer, *Chief Executive Officer*, **CAPI USA**
- Toby Pearson, *President and CEO*, **Care Providers of Minnesota**
- Amy Gavanda, *Director of Aging and Disability Services*, **Catholic Charities Twin Cities**
- Xavier Vazquez, *Executive Director*, **Centro Tyrone Guzman**
- Ann Bailey, *Executive Director*, **DARTS**
- Katey Zanolli-Wade, *Sr Director of Aging & Economic Security*, **East Side Neighborhood Services**
- Beth Wiggins, *Director of Caregiving and Aging Services*, **FamilyMeans**
- James Falvey, *Executive Director*, **Friends & Co**
- Benny Roberts, *Executive Director*, **Hallie Q. Brown Community Center**
- Ruth Hampton Olkon, *Chief Executive Officer*, **Jewish Family Service of St. Paul**
- Adero Riser Cobb, *President and CEO*, **Keystone Community Services**
- Kwangja Kwon, *Executive Director*, **Korean Service Center**
- Kari Thurlow, *President and CEO*, **LeadingAge Minnesota**
- Kristin Rigg, *Executive Director*, **Living at Home Network**
- Tory Merhar, *Associate Vice President, Older Adult Services*, **Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota**
- Patrick Rowan, *Executive Director*, **Meals on Wheels**
- Jarrod Peterson, *Chair*, **Mpls Area Senior Workers Assn. & St. Paul Senior Workers Association**
- Dawn Simonson, *President and CEO*, **Trellis, Minnesota Association of Area Agencies on Aging**
- George Schoephoerster, *Past President*, **Minnesota Association of Geriatrics Inspired Clinicians**
- Paula Woischke, *Director, Whitney Senior Center*, **Minnesota Association of Senior Services**
- Amanda Vickstrom, *Executive Director*, **Minnesota Elder Justice Center**
- Heidi Holste, *Executive Director*, **Minnesota Gerontological Society**
- Kathy Messerli, *Executive Director*, **Minnesota Home Care Association**
- David Blomquist, *Interim Executive Director*, **Minnesota Network of Hospice & Palliative Care**
- Kathy Greiner, *Executive Director*, **Rebuilding Together Minnesota**
- Deb Taylor, *Chief Executive Officer*, **Senior Community Services**
- Anjuli Mishra Cameron, *Chief Executive Officer*, **SEWA-AIFW**
- Jane Pederson, *Chief Medical Quality Officer*, **Stratis Health**
- Rajean Moone, *Faculty Director, Long-Term Care Administration*, **University of Minnesota**
- Donna Comer, *Board Liaison*, **Vital Aging Network**
- Julie Manworren, *President and CEO*, **Volunteers of America - Minnesota and Wisconsin**



AARP Testimony on HF 2646
House of Representatives Human Services Finance and Policy Committee
April 2, 2025

Co-Chairs Schomacker, Noor, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.F. 2646 on behalf of more than 620,000 AARP members statewide. This legislation would continue Minnesota's commitment to being age-friendly, addressing the future for the state's aging population through a multi-sector blueprint for aging, and investing in community grants. Without legislative action, the Council will sunset in 2027.

Our counties, cities, towns, and neighborhoods are the foundation for the high quality of life we strive for in Minnesota. Our citizens aged 50 and older are invaluable assets and play a fundamental role in building our communities. Today, 30 Age-Friendly Communities are enrolled in the network representing more than one-third of the state population, plus the state of Minnesota which enrolled in 2022. Here are a few examples of the collaboration happening in Age-Friendly communities:

- **Lakes Area Age-Friendly**, serving **Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens, and Traverse counties**, has worked on serving people with dementia, building disaster emergency planning, and improving transportation for older Minnesotans
- **Maple Grove** partnered with T-Mobile to provide tablets and training for residents to remain connected at home, especially helpful in addressing social isolation
- **Northfield** heard concerns from residents who were unable to connect with their healthcare providers and created and distributed a telemedicine guide to encourage and educate residents to visit their providers remotely
- **Lake County** is focused on home assessments and modifications, in addition to a grassroots initiative to develop affordable and accessible intergenerational housing
- **Princeton** created a "Community Center Without Walls" to address social isolation

By design, the Age-Friendly Council brings together state agencies, tribal communities, and older Minnesotans to build bridges across departments working to break down silos and find solutions to help older Minnesotans. Many policymakers are rightly thinking about how Minnesota will embrace the opportunities and address the challenges of an aging population, especially in the midst of much uncertainty. This bill provides a stable response by using an existing council that has already proven to be impactful and successful. Now, midway through the development of the Multi-Sector Blueprint for Aging, is not the time to disband the Age-Friendly Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of H.F. 2646.

Thomas Elness
State Advocacy Director
AARP Minnesota