

March 24, 2022

Testimony - HF 4036

Before the House Committee on State Government and Elections

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kathleen Kelso. I am an appointed member of the MN Board on Aging. MN Statute directs MBA to advise the Governor and Legislature on policies and planning for our aging population. In accordance with Statute, the MBA proposes HF 4036 and seeks Committee approval for a legislative task force to examine the necessity for a department on aging.

This year, the state demographer has projected that:

- MN will reach a milestone in 2023: 1 million people over the age of 65.
- In the next 8 years, 300,000 Minnesotans will be over the age of 75.

Today, the highest percentage of aging adults live in greater Minnesota. Rural counties experience aging earlier and more acutely than the metro area: in 15 counties, the percentage of older adults ranks from 23% to 32% of their population.

Where and how will we live and stay active as we age and choose to remain in our communities? This demographic shift is upon us today; it presents opportunities and challenges for legislative task force members who will consider the financial security, housing, transportation, health care, employment, and social service needs of our aging population.

Will there be safe housing that is affordable for older Minnesotans able to live independently? Will there be a transit system that will meet the demand? Will there be access to rural health care, support systems, jobs? The list goes on.

You have before you the rationale for this bill which I will summarize:

1. A Legislative Task Force is a first step toward multi-decade planning and implementation that would be measurable and accountable to Minnesotans possibly through a department on aging.
2. A Legislative Task Force will address critical questions about the necessity for a built infrastructure for aging.

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3. A Legislative Task Force is necessary because we require a *statewide* MN Plan for Aging that will drive fundamental change in how we support Minnesota families. To be successful, Minnesota communities must “reach scale” with every system that supports community life.

The MN Board on Aging is convinced that the formation of this legislative task force is the best step we, as a state, can take to serve current and future elders and their families in Minnesota.

Thank you.