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April 7, 2022

To: Chair Liebling, Chair Schultz, and Members of the Health Committee

From: Cathy McLeer, AARP State Director

Re: **AARP Support for the Prescription Drug Affordability Board/MinnesotaCare Buy-In; HF4706, Article 6, Health Omnibus Bill**

AARP Minnesota is writing to express our strong support for the Prescription Drug Affordability Board (PDAB) and the MinnesotaCare Buy-In program. As health insurance premiums, out-of-pocket costs, and prescription drugs continue to soar, both of these efforts can leverage the state's buying power to provide critical financial protections for all Minnesotans.

For years, our research has shown drug prices are rising faster than inflation & quickly out of reach for many of our members and all Minnesotans.  Moreover, older Minnesotans tend to take more drugs on average – typically 2 to 4 prescriptions to manage chronic conditions – so any increase can make the cost of these drugs unaffordable.

The Prescription Drug Affordability Board (PDAB) can address the challenge of high-cost drugs by setting limits on how much certain payers, including insurers, state and local governments, and consumers, pay for high-cost prescription medications.

The Buy-In program can help thousands of older Minnesotans who lack employer coverage, have high premiums and cost-sharing requirements in the marketplace, or are not eligible for tax subsidies through MNsure because their income is above 400% of federal poverty, yet the coverage is cost-prohibitive.

This bill is especially important because it provides protections to older Minnesotans who have been helped to purchase health care coverage under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) but are slated to lose these protections at the end of 2022.  MinnesotaCare is a tremendous success story by many measures, providing quality, affordable health care to thousands of Minnesotans.

These efforts could save all of us money - patients, taxpayers, and our health care system. But more importantly, they can help ensure that all Minnesotans have affordable access to the drugs and health care they need to get and stay healthy. We urge your support.