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March 25, 2022

To: Chair Schultz and Health and Human Services Committee Members

From: Cathy McLeer, State Director, AARP Minnesota

RE: AARP's Support of HF 4447 & HF 3729

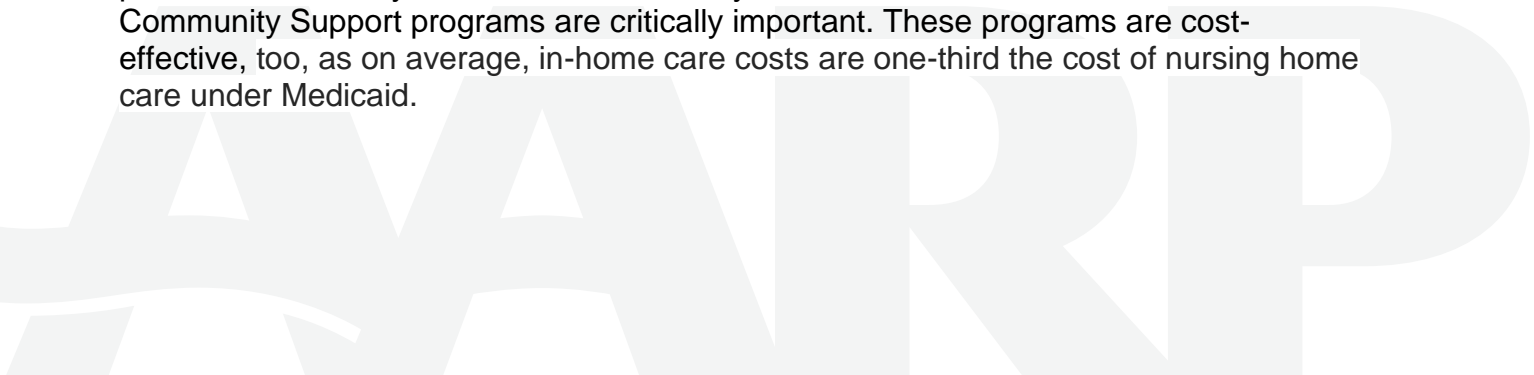
On behalf of AARP's 630,000 members and all older Minnesotans, we appreciate the House's attention in addressing the challenges in the long-term care workforce. We are writing to support your bill **House File 4447**, and Representative Edelson's bill, **House File 3729**. These bills make needed investments in the workforce by increasing wages to help recruit and retain direct care workers.

The gravity of the current workforce crisis will require additional resources and investments as envisioned in these bills to protect residents in nursing homes and other residential facilities, individuals who need assistance in their homes and communities, and address the growing health needs of older Minnesotans.

AARP has long called for fair pay, benefits, and improved working conditions of those caring for the health and well-being of our most vulnerable seniors. Nursing homes often have chronic staff shortages because of relatively low pay, difficult working conditions, and limited benefits. The new investments in House File 3729 will go a long way in helping to recruit and retain these dedicated, hard-working individuals.

However, with any new funding, accountability must follow. While we strongly support the provision in this bill that ensures funding goes directly to nursing home direct care staff, we would also recommend that nursing homes provide proof that the money was indeed spent on the workforce beyond self-attestation.

Additionally, we strongly support the new home and community-based care investments, including the workforce grants in HF 4447. AARP survey data show that most older Minnesotans want to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible. That's why increases to the Elderly Waiver, Alternative Care, and Essential Community Support programs are critically important. These programs are cost-effective, too, as on average, in-home care costs are one-third the cost of nursing home care under Medicaid.



Now more than ever, we need more direct care workers, as the shortage will only grow as the population ages. Beyond wages, AARP also urges lawmakers to expand access to critical benefits, including paid leave and access to health insurance.

AARP looks forward to working with lawmakers this session to help solve the workforce crisis, make nursing homes safer and help seniors stay in their own homes. Thank you again for your attention to this matter.

