

To: State Government Finance and Policy Committee members

Re: Written testimony for H.F. 2725

From: Stephanie Klinzing, former MN Board of Aging board member, former MN House member, former mayor of a Greater Minnesota city, former commissioner of a Greater Minnesota county, current MN Housing Agency board member, and current Greater Minnesota Housing Fund board member.

Throughout the past two years I have advocated for a top-of-government, comprehensive, coordinated, "all hands on deck" strategy as the only solution to the state's current crisis associated with the growing number of older Minnesotans and the rising need for aging programs and services.

I came to this conclusion from my front row seat as a member of the Minnesota Board on Aging, which I served for over seven years. I was hopeful that the establishment of a MN Department of Aging would be the recommendation of the Legislative Task Force on Aging when it concluded its work in December.

Although the Task Force final recommendation recognizes the need for a top-of-government strategy to stem the aging crisis, it falls short of the establishment of a fully funded state department with the authority to design and lead a statewide comprehensive, coordinated strategy to meet the immense challenges we have today and will face in the future.

Nonetheless, I support the Task Force's final recommendation in the form of H.F. 2725 as an excellent "first step" to the establishment of a state department focused on the status of aging policies, services and programs in Minnesota and on the people who need them to age in health and in a place and community of their choosing.

I believe that this bill will receive strong bipartisan support as a no-brainer solution to begin getting our hands around the unprecedented growing needs in services and programs in every aspect of life (housing, transportation, health, nutrition, social etc) for a burgeoning population of Minnesota elders. The establishment of a Healthy Aging Sub-cabinet and Citizens Engagement

Council which will produce a statewide healthy aging plan, will pave the road to a future where elders will be supported in their desire to age in place in their own homes and communities.

Passage of H.F. 2725 and the subsequent creation of a well-researched, citizen-involved, strategically-designed, government-backed plan to guide Minnesota (for years to come) to serve and protect its eldest citizens as they age among us, is also necessary to stem the negative impacts currently coming from this country's highest office. With the passage of H.F. 2725 Minnesota will be making it very clear that our eldest citizens are a vitally important segment of our state's population and we will continue to do whatever we can to insure that they get the respect, the honor, and the services they need to live healthy and dignified lives.

I urge your support of H.F. 2725.

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