

To: Committee on State Government and Elections Fr: Stephanie  
Klinzing, Member MN Board on Aging Re: HF 979 Letter of Support

My name is Stephanie Klinzing and I have served on the Minnesota Board on Aging for five years. My primary qualification for appointment to the board, first by Gov. Dayton and last year by Gov. Walz, was my 18 years as an elected public official, which included some time spent as a MN House of Representatives member.

Never before in the history of Minnesota have we faced the challenges of serving the needs of a growing population of elders (fueled by the huge numbers in the Baby Boomer generation) who are, more than any generation before, interested in staying active and aging in place; in their homes and communities and the unprecedented need for services and programs that this generation will need to live the kinds of lives they want and deserve.

This is not a time for timidity but a time for boldness. We need to plow new paths and plant new fields in order to meet the challenges we have now and will have for many years into the future. Even though those who have served in various aspect of this endeavor prior to us should be congratulated and thanked for the foundations they have laid and the accomplishments they made in the area of serving Minnesota's elders, looking back on their history will not give us what we need to go forward because we face challenges that they only heard about and anticipated. We are the ones who the have an obligation to find solutions to the challenges and to seize the opportunities for today.

Having served on the Minnesota Board on Aging for over five years I am seeing clearly the mountain we have as a state to climb in order to be positioned to serve the current and coming needs of aging Minnesotans. I believe that a coordinated, statewide effort is required. I believe that it is only through top-of-the government authority that we can accomplish what is expected and needed.

The aging population of Minnesota, now and into the future, deserves a

seat at the table as the state's top leaders dedicate resources and efforts each year to support the many aspects of life in the state. The Minnesota Board on Aging is a part of the aging landscape in Minnesota but implementing on a statewide basis the important things we discuss and study, along with capturing the needed funding to get things done, is not entirely within the board's jurisdiction. In fact, there is no part of state government at this time that has the authority and capacity to accomplish what is needed statewide.

I believe the best thing we can do as leaders in aging in Minnesota, is to help develop and prepare that place at the table at the highest government level for Minnesota's elders by supporting the process to establish a Minnesota Department of Aging.

This is bill a bold move. But it is a wisely crafted and a calculated move. Relying on the wisdom of Minnesota legislators to study and then make the decision to proceed and then how to proceed is exactly the right approach to take.

As a board, we are convinced that the formation of this task force is the best step we, as a state, can take to serve the current and future elders of Minnesota.

In my Native American culture, respecting and honoring elders is paramount to the health of all ages. I believe this is also true for our entire state and something with which all Minnesotans agree.

I urge you to vote "yes" on moving this important legislation forward.

Stephanie Klinzing,  
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