

**Written Testimony for HF 1851**

**Carol Lundquist, Executive Director of the Living at Home Network**

Dear Chair Noor and Human Services Finance Committee Members,

I am Carol Lundquist, the Executive Director of the Living at Home Network (LAHN), a statewide network of 32 small, local nonprofits that draw resources from their communities to help older adults live at home. Live Well at Home grants are essential to our operations and help leverage other funding from local businesses, foundations and the community. We support HF 1851 to increase Live Well at Home grant funding.

Our Live at Home/Block Nurse programs are a proven, cost-effective model for serving seniors throughout MN. **Our model relies heavily on volunteers, working with a small, often part-time, staff, to help their senior neighbors remain at home.** In 2022:

- our programs served 8,500 seniors.
- our **unpaid volunteers donated 54,000 hours** providing things like rides to doctor appointments, friendly visits to give family caregivers a break, household chores and maintenance, like snow removal which we can all appreciate this winter.

Simply stated, our Living at Home Network programs can make the difference between a senior being able to live at home or move to a facility.

- Some programs have part-time visiting nurses who not only help extend senior's independence but help avoid costly emergency room visits and repeated hospital stays.
- Most programs offer health & wellness classes/clinics that keep seniors safe at home.
- All our programs rely on volunteers. Snow Angels in Southeast Seniors Program in Mpls have been shoveling their senior neighbors all winter, a huge commitment this year!

Our block nurse programs apply for grants up to \$60,000 per year through the Core category of Live Well at Home grants. This category is designed for small, low budget programs like ours. Half of our network programs have budgets under \$120,000/year. The funding in this Core category has not increased in 10 years.

**We support increasing the Core category by \$1 M/biennium to help us reach more seniors in rural areas like Granite Falls and Hallock.** Our Live at Home model is especially effective in hard to serve rural parts of our state in desperate need of senior services. Organized, community volunteers can make all the differences in these rural areas.

**An increase to Core funding will also provide stability to existing LAHN programs** in the face of rising costs for staff and programs like monthly lunches that keep seniors connected.

LAHN also supports the expansion of the Live Well at Home grants for larger programs. It will take us ALL working together - small and big nonprofits, nursing homes, assisted living, local and state governments, and community volunteers to meet the challenges of our rapidly aging population and ensure all Minnesota seniors can live their best life possible.

Thank you.