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**AARP Testimony
Senior Property Tax Relief
House Property Tax Division
3.2.2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on several bills before your committee to lower property taxes for seniors. My name is Mary Jo George, and I am the Associate State Director of Advocacy for AARP Minnesota. On behalf of our membership, AARP appreciates the attention paid to reducing property taxes for seniors, as housing costs can be the largest expense for older Minnesotans and directly affect day-to-day financial security.

The vast majority of adults over the age of 65 want to stay in their homes as long as possible, and challenges like housing costs and financial uncertainty can put that possibility out of reach. Property tax continues to be among the most financially burdensome for low-income seniors on a fixed income and people with disabilities to absorb. As home values continue to spike, homeowners and renters alike can struggle to keep up with paying property taxes.

Overall, AARP believes circuit breakers, as envisioned in Representative Youakim's **Homestead Credit Refund bill (HF 3518)**, are among the most cost-effective approaches to property tax relief because they target assistance to households with the least ability to pay, rather than providing more expensive across-the-board relief to all taxpayers without regard to their payment capacity. We also support expanding the property tax refund for renters or Renters' Credit.

However, beyond circuit breakers, AARP supports a number of the bills before you today and is evaluating other bills based on our position that property tax relief for seniors should be equitable, income targeted, and cost-effective. At this time, AARP supports the following bills:

- **HF 3384-Hanson (Senior citizens' property tax deferral requirements modified)** - expands the income limit to \$96,000 for the Senior Property Tax Deferral Program and reduces the length of years a senior has to live in their home from 15 years to 5 years. Tax deferral programs directly address the problems faced by cash-strapped seniors with significant equity in their homes to pay current property taxes. We also believe this can help many seniors who have moved or downsized but still want to stay

in their communities.

- **HF 3432-Wolgamatt (Senior claimant and claimants with a disability exemption amount expanded)** - doubles the current exemption in the property tax refund in law today for seniors and people with disabilities from \$6,000 to \$12,000.

AARP believes that these bills, in addition to changes to the Homestead Credit Refund bill (**HF 3518**) and Representative Huot's bill **HF 3725**, which provides relief to homeowners who have experienced a spike in their property taxes, will go a long way in helping retired seniors living on a fixed income who have modest incomes and have to pay other increasing expenses like medications, utilities, and groceries.

Together these bills will provide the chance for more of Minnesota's older residents to continue to age in their own homes and communities among family and friends, as well as offer an additional step toward remedying long-standing inequalities in the housing arena.

Thank you again for your time and attention to this important issue for seniors.