



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF
AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

May 12, 2021

Members of the Taxes Conference Committee
Minnesota Legislature

Senator Carla Nelson
Senator Bill Weber
Senator Jeremy Miller
Senator Thomas Bakk
Senator Ann Rest

Representative Paul Marquart
Representative Cheryl Youakim
Representative Kaohly Van Her
Representative Dave Lislegard
Representative Greg Davids

Dear Conferees,

The Minnesota Association of Area Agencies on Aging requests your support of the volunteer driver income tax subtraction being considered as part of the Taxes Omnibus Bill. Currently, volunteer drivers are penalized for receiving mileage reimbursement that exceeds 14 cents per mile when they provide rides for community members for medical care and to access community services. This mileage reimbursement is subject to tax as income.

Creating an income tax subtraction will protect and strengthen volunteer driver programs and help to ensure that volunteers can continue to transport older adults and people with disabilities to medical appointments and community services across Minnesota. Without the provision in law, volunteer driver programs will continue to face challenges to recruitment and retention of volunteers. When volunteer driver programs do not have sufficient volunteers, older adults and others who no longer drive cannot get needed medical care. This is an especially critical issue in rural communities where there are no other transportation options and family members live far away.

Volunteer driver programs are an essential segment of Minnesota's transportation infrastructure:

- 77,000 Minnesotans depend on volunteers for access to healthcare and community services;
- Volunteers most recently reported 168,000 trips annually;
- The demand for rides is growing as our population ages;
- Volunteer driver programs are the only transportation service in many rural communities.

Volunteer-provided rides are safe and low-cost. It is essential that volunteer driver programs thrive throughout our state to facilitate access to healthcare, reduce isolation and prevent premature use of institutional care.

Please support this common-sense provision for inclusion in statute to help volunteer programs thrive and grow as our older population increases at an unprecedented rate. Older adults are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Kristi Kane, Director, Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging

Lori Vrolson, Executive Director, Central Minnesota Council on Aging

Darla Waldner, Director, Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging

Dawn Simonson, President and CEO, Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging, d/b/a Trellis

Earlene Buffalo, Director, Minnesota Indian Area Agency on Aging

Jason Swanson, Executive Director, Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging

Laurie Brownell, Director, Southeastern Minnesota Area Agency on Aging