



Legislative Task Force on Aging Comments – Kris Sundberg

The reason we are here today is to address a critical issue that stems from deeply ingrained ageist attitudes in our society. While it is commendable that our highest priority is ensuring the well-being of our children, this focus starkly contrasts with the significantly diminished attention and care given to our elders and people with disabilities. We have established numerous safety nets to protect our youth, such as the newly created MN Department of Children, Youth and Families. But at the other end of the spectrum, our elders are often left vulnerable, forgotten, and underserved.

Elder Voice Advocates was born out of necessity, a response to the widespread abuse and neglect that too many of our citizens experience in long-term care settings. This is not just about subpar care; it is about the unnecessary suffering and needless deaths that occur because our current systems fail to protect some of our most vulnerable citizens. No one deserves to end their life in such a manner—isolated, neglected, and in pain.

The truth is, everyone desires to age in the community of their choice, surrounded by the supports they need to live with dignity and independence. However, our current governmental infrastructure is fragmented, siloed, and ultimately ineffective in addressing the unique needs of our aging population.

We can no longer afford to ignore this issue. Minnesota is facing a rapidly aging population, and our current systems are not equipped to handle this demographic shift. It is time for Minnesota to take a bold step forward by establishing a Department for Community Aging. This department would be dedicated to planning and coordinating efforts across the state to ensure that our elders can live their later years in safety, health, and with the respect they deserve.

We recognize that state agencies, provider organizations, and institutions may favor maintaining the status quo or making only incremental adjustments. However, this approach is inadequate and unjust. We urge you to demonstrate the courage of conviction to advocate for the creation of a dedicated state agency that prioritizes the well-being of older adults, ensuring that we finally receive the attention and care we deserve.

By creating a Department for Community Aging, we can develop a comprehensive strategy to meet the needs of our aging population, bridge the gaps in services, and ensure that all Minnesotans, regardless of age, can live with dignity and security. This is not just about policy; it's about upholding the values of respect, compassion, and justice for all members of our community.

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