



House Bill 1012 – Support
February 5, 2025
House Appropriations, Human Resources Division
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Chairman Nelson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Janelle Moos, Associate State Director of Advocacy with AARP North Dakota. AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization with nearly 38 million members. Approximately 82,000 of those members live in North Dakota.

We appreciate this committee's work to dig into issues important to older North Dakotans and this need will continue to grow. Today our population age 50+ is almost 230,000 or 32% and over 50% of those households are age 65 or older. Today in North Dakota over 9 counties have a mean age of over 50 and a number of others are right on their heels.

In 2023, AARP conducted a survey of 703 people over 45 in North Dakota asking them how they feel about issues such as health care, financial security, energy costs, caregiving, livable communities and more. North Dakotans provided three primary takeaways including: 1- retirement is on their minds, 2- affordable healthcare is important to them and 3- [They want to remain independent and age in place \(click to watch discussion\)](#). The third takeaway relates directly to programs and funding outlined in HB 1012- Aging and Adult Services Division including:

- Over half of respondents rated their communities as good or very good places to live.
- Seven in ten would prefer to receive care for themselves or a loved one at home.
- 65% are either currently providing or have provided care in the past to an adult relative or friend.
- 79% want to have services available to age in place
- 78% want to say in their home as they age
- 81% told us that getting places independently is important

Investments in Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) like those in the Aging and Adults Services will support older North Dakotans deserve to know they have options for care as they

age. Overwhelmingly they prefer to stay in their homes and communities and the budget should continue the state moving in a direction that prioritizes Home and Community Based care.

A couple of other notes related to the Aging and Adults Services portion of the DHS budget that we support:

- \$500,000 in SPED program to support a “capable like” program that would be offered to people 65 and older access to a handyman and assessment by OT/PT and nurse that would go into their home when first experiencing functional decline to assess the home and make modifications.
- Home health private nurse increases and targeted rate increase for unit rate increase in order to competitive with other states—
- Strengthen HCBS -transition and diversion program—other congregate living- other people on Medicaid and need to transition out of nursing home or to a private home
- Need for one new Ombudsman and Adult Protective Services- two new FTEs

In addition, SNAP is an important program that ensures older adults and families get the nutrition needed. It is an especially important program for Americans over 50 because many face challenges to employment, live on fixed incomes, live alone, and have limited financial resources to pay for necessities like food, housing, and essential medicine. To people struggling to put food on the table, hunger is not a political issue, it is a daily reality. SNAP is a vital lifeline that feeds 23,840 North Dakota households. 35% of those recipients are either elderly or disabled. Also remember, participants generally spend their SNAP dollars locally, soon after receiving them, boosting local economies.

LIHEAP has served as a lifeline for low-income families. As you may know, AARP believe utility issues and rates are a key pocketbook issue. We have intervened in various cases in front of the North Dakota Public Service Commission on behalf of older adults and consumers and know the struggle of families to afford their utility payments. Having a safety net for families especially in our climate is not only the right thing it is the moral thing to do.

Finally, there are important investments in housing including in HB 1012 – HHS budget Eviction prevention and targeted rental assistance (\$13.5M) and home modification grants for accessibility (\$1M)- that will support as way to ensure older North Dakotans can continue to live in their homes and communities.

Surveys by AARP show that most Americans, including older North Dakotas, prefer to live in walkable neighborhoods that offer a mix of housing and transportation options and are close to

jobs, schools, shopping, entertainment, and green spaces. Missing Middle Housing can meet these needs. “Missing Middle Housing” describes a set of residential building types that exist in the middle of the continuum between detached single-family houses and large apartment buildings. The word “middle” as used in the term “Missing Middle Housing” principally refers to the mid-sized housing types that exist between single family homes and large (often high-rise) apartment or condominium buildings. However, “middle” also relates to the home type’s level of affordability, given that this home type uses land more efficiently, designs small yet spacious residences, employs lower-cost-but-still-quality construction methods and reduces the reliance on automobile owners.

With a growing aging population, construction of a variety of housing options will become more important. Currently, we have thousands of older adults who are “house rich but cash poor.” Some would like to sell their home and buy something more affordable or accessible in their community, but in most cases, that type of housing does not exist.

Thank you for your work on this important budget that provides the resources and support that allows so many North Dakotans to live and age in their homes and communities.