



House Appropriations Committee  
**IN SUPPORT** – HB 1506 –Appropriations Adjustments  
November 8, 2021  
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Chairman Delzer and members of the House Appropriations Committee, I am Janelle Moos, Associate State Director of Advocacy at AARP North Dakota. I'm offering testimony in favor of HB 1506.

AARP North Dakota, on behalf of our 83,000 members, would like to thank you for your efforts and leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognize that while the worst of this unprecedented time may be behind us, many issues which disproportionately impact older North Dakotans have surfaced during the pandemic that require continued action from our state. As you prepare to budget and appropriate funds from the American Rescue Plan Act, AARP North Dakota encourages you to address these challenges by authorizing the Department of Human Services to also accept additional federal funds outlined in HB 1506.

AARP North Dakota supports the Department's effort to provide services and care as close to home as possible. In a 2020 North Dakota Vital Voices Survey, a state specific survey of issues that impact North Dakotan's 45+ conducted every three years, 79% indicated that staying in their own home as they got older, getting to the places they need to go and having access to quality long term care in their community was extremely or very important. Also, 62% said staying in their community as they got older was extremely or very important. It was no surprise to us and I am sure it doesn't surprise you.

### **Long-Term Care Services and Supports**

On May 13, 2021, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services issued [guidance](#) to states on the temporary enhanced funding for Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) under the American Rescue Plan Act. The State Medicaid Director Letter ([SMDL #21-003](#)) provides guidance to states regarding the implementation of the temporary increase to North Dakota's federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) of 10 percentage points for certain Medicaid HCBS expenditures under the ARP Act.

This temporary FMAP increase is available to states beginning April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022, and the guidance provides that state funds freed up (i.e., state funds equivalent to the

amount of federal funds attributable to the increased FMAP) can be used through March 31, 2024 to improve HCBS in the state (specifically to enhance, expand, or strengthen HCBS). Examples include increasing access to HCBS for Medicaid beneficiaries, protecting the HCBS workforce, safeguarding the financial stability for HCBS providers, and accelerating meaningful reform of long-term services and supports.

Section 5 of HB 1506 includes the \$31 million in federal authority for the Department's 10% Home and Community-Based Plan. Additionally, section 13 of HB 1506 appropriates \$5,000,000 for the money follows the person program.

Given a vast majority of North Dakota want to live independently in their homes and communities, AARP urges North Dakota to take advantage of this unique opportunity to use this increased funding outlined in sections 5 and 13 to supplement existing state HCBS efforts.

### **Family Caregivers**

Caregiving may be one of the most important, and challenging, role a family member may ever take on. More than 62,000 North Dakotans care for older parents, spouses or other loved ones, helping them live independently at home. One-quarter (26%) of North Dakota residents age 45+ are currently providing unpaid care to help an adult relative or friend and almost half (45%) who are currently unpaid caregivers have provided this type of help in the past.

Section 7 of HB 1506 appropriates \$386,690 to the lifespan respite care program that will help provide support and resources to help the 62,000 family caregivers in the state to keep more North Dakotans in their homes longer.

We would like to thank you again for your service to our state and for your leadership during these challenging times. AARP North Dakota is committed to working with you to make these critical improvements in our state. If you have questions or wish to discuss these items further, please contact me at [jmoos@aarps.org](mailto:jmoos@aarps.org) or 701.355.3641.

Thank you.