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To: LTSS Steering Committee

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From: MN DFL Senior Caucus

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Subject: Public Comment on LTSS Advisory Council Recommendations

The MN DFL Senior Caucus is a statewide advocacy organization for older Minnesotans within the Minnesota state DFL party. We recently adopted a party platform category called: *Aging with Dignity*. That is only one of the reasons why we are alarmed by the LTSS Advisory Council's recommendations to reduce or eliminate critical aging grants. **We urge you to reject these cuts.**

These grants are only modest investments, but they build the local networks of volunteers and informal caregivers that keep seniors in their homes and out of costlier care. They also leverage thousands of hours of free volunteer help and local, non-public funds. Cutting them will not end the need for these services. It will cost the state more and leave very rural areas with no way to serve older adults at home.

Demographic shifts are already straining aging resources statewide. Workforce shortages, population changes and limited community resources made these networks challenging to build originally and they cannot easily be rebuilt. Now is the worst possible time to dismantle them.

We ask that the following be removed from the proposed cuts:

1. **Live Well at Home (LWAH) grants (\$8.087M).** Cutting them would cost about 100 staff positions and disrupt services to 26,114 clients, including 6,404 new clients.

- **Living at Home Block Nurse (LAHBN) program (\$1.5M immediate impact).**
Loss of LWAH funding would virtually eliminate this long-standing, volunteer-based program, which is vital in rural areas. Volunteers drive neighbors to medical appointments and the grocery store and spot problems like isolation and poor nutrition before they become crises. Local boards raise additional funds and oversee spending. Without the program, clients face nursing home placement, spend-down to Medicaid waiver services, or going without help - which is dangerous. In much of rural Minnesota, no other services exist.
 - **Core LWAH grants (\$6.587M).** Eliminating these grants carries the same risks: more people at risk of expensive nursing home placement – or even costlier placements. The components are Community Services Grants (\$3.128M), Caregiver Support Grants (\$479,000) and Community Services Development (\$2.98M). These grants help communities build culturally competent home and community-based services for people 65 and older, support caregivers, and improve chronic disease management.
2. **Elder Care Development Partnerships grants (\$1.78M immediate impact).** The loss of these grants will deeply harm the six regional Area Agencies on Aging, which rely on them to fund about 15 staff statewide. Those staff provide expertise to assist with falls-prevention, transportation, in-home support, home safety modifications, and education on dementia and brain health, largely in rural areas.
 3. **Customized Living Quality Improvement grants (\$1M immediate impact).** These grants support providers with at least 75% of residents on the Elderly Waiver (EW), which pays less than private rates. They fund improvements that Medicaid waivers do not cover, such as memory and mental health care, accessible transportation, call light systems and staff training. In SFY 2026, they served 499 residents and in over five grant cycles they reached 28 providers across urban, suburban and rural Minnesota. Cutting this funding means older adults on Medicaid receive lower quality care than those paying privately.
 4. **Alternative Care (AC) fee increase.** The proposal raises fees by 5% at each Federal Poverty Guideline level and ends the fee exemption for people using Consumer-Directed

Community Supports (CDCS). AC serves low-income people 65 and older who need nursing home level of care but are not yet eligible for Medical Assistance. Higher fees puts home-based care out of reach for many low-income seniors.

Please protect these investments on behalf of thousands of Minnesota elders. In addition, representatives from the DFL Senior Caucus are happy to present our recommendations in person. Thank you for considering our request.

Kay C Hendrikson, PhD, Chair
Minnesota DFL Senior Caucus