January 3, 2022

Cathy McLeer, State Director
AARP Minnesota
1919 University Avenue W., Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55104

Dear Ms. McLeer:

It is with pride and excitement that I submit the State of Minnesota’s application to join the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities / World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

Of Minnesota’s 5.7 million residents, approximately 20 percent are 60 or older, and that number is growing rapidly. Last year the number of older adults eclipsed the number of children in our state for the first time in history. This demographic shift presents a range of opportunities and challenges for all of us. Simply put, our systems and communities were not designed for modern lifespans. It is time for that to change.

Decision-makers must determine how various systems and supports, including financial security, housing, transportation, health care, employment, and social services, among others, can be strengthened and updated to ensure that Minnesotans have communities that meet their needs at every stage of life. In addition, thousands of direct support workers, along with the estimated 650,000 unpaid family, friends, and neighbors who fulfill caregiving roles in our state, are struggling to meet the ever-increasing demand for care.

Minnesota has a strong reputation for providing high-quality services, including those that help older residents remain in their homes and communities of choice. This is the result of well-established programs and commitments, and is bolstered by more recent, significant steps toward evolving the State’s approach even further. Moving forward, we have put diversity and inclusion at the center of the work so that all residents may age well and rightfully enjoy the quality of life for which Minnesota is known.

On December 11, 2019, I was pleased to issue Executive Order 19-38 to establish the Governor’s Council on an Age-Friendly Minnesota, an entity that now leads this work and includes representatives from nine State agencies and boards and six members from throughout the state. In June 2021, the Minnesota Legislature passed—and I was proud to sign—legislation formalizing its commitment to enroll in the age-friendly network. The legislation\(^1\) also allowed for the continuation of the Governor’s Council, and authorized funding for a new age-friendly

\(^1\) Minnesota Laws 2021, First Special Session, Chapter 7, Article 17, Sections 5 & 8

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communities grant program, which will help local governments, tribal nations, and community organizations undertake age-friendly work.

Age-Friendly Minnesota aims to make our systems and communities more inclusive of and responsive to older adults—a group of which we will all one day be a part. Through membership in the age-friendly network, we look forward to officially joining this important global movement in partnership with AARP.

Thank you for your consideration of Minnesota’s application.

Sincerely,

Tim Walz
Governor

CC: Assistant Commissioner Dan Pollock, DHS