



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF  
AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

## 2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### Senior Nutrition

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m4a advocates for funding to meet the basic needs of older adults facing hunger or lacking healthy food that supports health and wellness, particularly for older adults with chronic illness or recovering from a hospital or nursing home stay. Home-delivered meals are the gold standard to support older adults and help them remain independent at home. Congregate dining in senior housing and at community sites provides nutrition and reduces isolation.

***m4a supports:***

- Increasing funding to the MN Board on Aging for senior meals to help bridge the funding gap created by year-over-year aging of the population and exacerbated by self-isolation of frail older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Ongoing future increases to the base State of Minnesota allocation through 2040 aligned with older adult population growth and a recognized cost index such as the CPI.
- Addressing food insecurity for older adults, including increasing eligibility for SNAP benefits for the 50+ population from today's income threshold of 165% of poverty to 200% of poverty. Both Wisconsin and North Dakota have made these changes.

### Workforce

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m4a advocates on behalf of older adults and others employed as direct care workers in health and long-term care and for older adults and family caregivers that rely on assistance from this workforce. m4a is aligned with the Long-Term Care Imperative and AARP MN on this critical issue of importance to all Minnesotans that is driven by population aging and made ever more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

***m4a supports:***

- Increased funding for long-term care facilities to assist in permanent wage increases.
- Increased funding for home and community-based services to provide equitable wages for employees.
- Increased funding for direct care service programs that allow family caregivers to assist their loved one while receiving a stipend.

- Conducting a rate study to support implementation of PACE (Program for All-Inclusive Care of the Elderly).
- Studying the options to modify the State’s Medicaid reimbursement system to assist in raising wages.

## Social Isolation

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m4a advocates for older adults and family caregivers to ensure they have the opportunity for regular social interaction, whether in-person, virtually or through other methods. Social isolation leads to depression and anxiety, accelerates cognitive impairment and use of alcohol and other substances.

### ***m4a supports:***

- Accessible and affordable broadband services to give older adults a means of connecting virtually to others, participating in social services, and receiving telehealth.
- A study funded by the State and delivered to the Legislature to help lawmakers and others with interest to understand the human and public cost of social isolation among older adults and identify best practices to mitigate isolation and loneliness.
- Increased funding to support cost-effective services focused directly on preventing or reducing social isolation and loneliness.

## Volunteer Drivers

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m4a advocates for transportation options that enable older adults to access healthcare and community services. Volunteer drivers provide more than 70,000 rides annually for this purpose and also reduce social isolation as a secondary benefit. The Minnesota legislature passed two provisions last session to reduce financial penalties volunteer drivers incur for their service and use of their personal vehicles. m4a, as an active member of the Minnesota Volunteer Driver Coalition, seeks change in federal law that will more fully support volunteer drivers and the service they provide.

### ***m4a supports:***

- Changing the charitable mileage rate, from \$0.14 to equal to the business rate for mileage reimbursement.
- Requiring the IRS to change the charitable mileage reimbursement rate for volunteer drivers to match that of business drivers.
- Raising awareness with Minnesota-based vehicle insurance companies on the recent changes in law defining a volunteer as differentiated from a driver “for hire” such as a taxi or Uber/Lyft driver and also encourages raising awareness of the income tax exclusion for any mileage reimbursement provided to a volunteer above \$0.14/mile.