



House Committee on Early Childhood & Human Services

Testimony in Support of HB 3497

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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with 500,000 members in Oregon. We work to empower people to choose how they live as they age and advocate on issues that matter most to Oregonians 50 plus and their families, including health security, financial resilience and livable and age-friendly communities that help to create conditions that improve the quality of life for all as we age. **We are pleased so support HB 3497.**

The Aging Population in Oregon

Oregon is one of the fastest-aging states in the West, and our population is aging faster than the national average. Census projections indicate that by 2030, 20% of 1 in 5 Oregonians will be 65 years or older. However, the reality is that in 25 out of 36 Oregon counties, 65+ residents account for more than 25% of the population. By 2034, in less than 10 years from today, there will be more older adults than children under 18. This is a permanent demographic shift which will have a profound impact in our communities. Additionally, while today Oregon is one of the least diverse states in the country, we are becoming more diverse. By 2050, 45% of the U.S. older population will be non-white, and Oregon to expected to also keep part with this demographic shift.

Economic Contributions of Older Adults

Contrary to the dominant narrative of old people as burdens to our society and aging as a net deficit phenomenon, the reality is that older adults and people 50+ powerful drivers for growth and positive economic impact for our communities and state. According to AARP research, the longevity economy, defined as the sum of all economic activity supported by the consumer spending of households headed by someone aged 50 or older, contributed \$98 billion to Oregon's Gross Domestic Product in 2018. This is expected to grow to over \$340 billion by 2050. National research indicates that 80% of people plan to work past age 65, which is good news given the current labor shortages and the wealth of talent and expertise older workers bring to any business and workplace.

Beyond their economic contributions, people aged 50 and older are critical to the health and wellbeing of families and communities. In 2023, older adults contributed \$1.3 billion in volunteering activities and provided \$8.7 billion in unpaid caregiving to older friends and family. As an example, during Covid, many grandparents stepped in to help with childcare and remote learning. They assisted with schoolwork, read stories, and engaged in educational activities to support parents who were juggling work and home responsibilities. In addition, older adults often provided financial assistance to their younger family members who faced job losses or

reduced income due to the pandemic. A study by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) reports that older adults experienced declines in net wealth during the pandemic, but many still provided financial support to their families.

Challenges and Opportunities Facing Oregon

However, we are not sufficiently prepared to leverage the opportunities and address the challenges of our changing demographics. Challenges include financial strain on individuals and, housing insecurity among older adults, lack of transportation and mobility options, higher prevalence of disability and chronic conditions, inadequate and strained health and long-term care infrastructure including workforce shortages such as what we are experiencing today.

The Importance of HB 3497

HB 3497 is a crucial first step towards helping Oregon prepare for the future and become more livable and age-friendly. The bill will establish a taskforce to develop a comprehensive Multi-Sector Plan for Aging, ensuring that Oregon can effectively address the needs and also leverage the assets of a growing aging population.

Examples from Other States

The movement for state multi-sector plans for aging is growing across the country. Since 2022, the Center for Health Care Strategies has worked with nearly 30 states through the Multisector Plan for Aging Learning Collaborative to build buy-in, obtain authorization, engage stakeholders, and develop or update their plans.

As part of our livable and age-friendly communities work, AARP is working across the country to advance and support multi-sector plans as a critical strategy to help state become livable and age-friendly places for people of all ages and abilities can live and age well.

Below are a few examples of states who have been pioneers in developing their MPAs:

- **California:** Released its Master Plan for Aging in 2021. The plan goals including housing for all ages, health reimagined, inclusion and equity, caregiving that works, and affordable aging. The plan has been instrumental in improvements in long-term care and aging services and directing investments to support local livability initiatives in towns and cities.
- **Vermont:** The "Age Strong Vermont" plan, completed in early 2024, is a 10-year visionary roadmap designed to make Vermont a great place for all ages and stages of life. The plan emphasizes age-friendly communities and economic security, aiming to enhance the quality of life for older Vermonters, improving access to healthcare, and supporting economic security for older adults.
- **Maryland:** The "Longevity Ready Maryland," the states MPA was established in early 2024 and emphasizing transportation options, affordable housing, and promoting healthy aging through community-based programs.
- **Minnesota:** Age-Friendly Minnesota initiative released its Multisector Blueprint for Aging in December 2024, outlining a comprehensive approach to aging. The blueprint focuses on connected communities' emergency preparedness, optimized health and longevity, and economic security and aims to make Minnesota an age-inclusive state

Each MPA reflects the values, issues and priorities of the state as defended and determined by the stakeholders. As the state where Age-Friendly Communities framework has its origin in the US, we are ripe to have its own Multi-sector Plan which will make Oregon an age-friendly state.

At the 2023 Age-Friendly Oregon Summit, 200 participants from across Oregon enthusiastically provided support for creating a MPA for Oregon and input on five bold goal areas that have been identified based on research and statewide listening: housing, caregiving, workforce, health, including behavioral health, and economic vitality. Through HB 3497 we have an opportunity to shape our shared future and help create the conditions where all Oregonians can age well in our state.

Being Ready for a Future that is Older and More Diverse

As our population ages and becomes more diverse, a Multi-Sector Plan for Aging is essential to help address health equity and social determinants of health. Historically marginalized older adults, including those from racial and ethnic minority groups, face greater health disparities and economic challenges. For instance, Black and Hispanic older adults are more likely to experience poverty and have higher rates of chronic health conditions compared to their White counterparts. From collecting comprehensive data and implementing targeted interventions, MPAs can ensure that these populations receive the support they need. Improving access to affordable housing, healthcare, and transportation can significantly enhance the quality of life for marginalized older adults.

Conclusion

In 2022, there were an estimated 806,907 adults aged 65 or older living in Oregon. By 2050, this number is projected to increase to 1,280,678, representing a 59% increase. This significant growth underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive plan to address the needs and assets of our aging population to ensure that our shared future is one bring one.

On behalf of over half million AARP members ages 50+ statewide, we urge you to support HB 3497. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to make our state an age-friendly and livable place for people of all ages and abilities