

TESTIMONY HB24-1322

SENATE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES 5/1/2024

My name is Leslie Kalechman. I live in Broomfield and am a volunteer for AARP Colorado. AARP Colorado, representing roughly 670,000 Coloradans, Strongly Supports HB1322. Our colleagues DRCOG and CO Center for Aging join AARP CO in support. As a retired Medical Social Worker, I can attest to housing and food insecurity needs amongst aging Coloradans, as well as the difficulties with hospital discharge and health treatment plan compliance caused by a patient's housing instability.

Housing and Food insecurity amongst America's Seniors has been rising. According to AARP, nearly one in every six seniors in America faces the threat of hunger and not being properly nourished. The issue is severe enough that AARP reports that seniors face a healthcare bill of more than \$130B every year due to medical issues stemming from senior hunger. <sup>1</sup>

Here in Colorado, we need innovative approaches to addressing food insecurity. For example, our Area Agencies on Aging, a service provider for senior nutrition programs, are overwhelmed with need and struggling to clear waitlists.

Additionally, rising home costs, everything from rent and insurance to taxes, is impacting many Older Coloradans, most of whom live on fixed incomes.

Health care spending is often higher for people experiencing homelessness, who often use expensive emergency room care as their primary source of health care. The inability to afford housing can also lead to longer-than-necessary stays in institutional care. These health care costs are unnecessary and preventable.

This legislation gets CO a step closer to solutions, This feasibility study and pursuing a federal 1115 waiver can address housing and nutrition services in a budget-neutral manner and make life-changing differences to aging Coloradans. Thank you for your support and I'm happy to take any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> The Facts Behind Senior Hunger, Aging in Place, July, 2022.

<sup>2</sup>AARP Letter to Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, 3/21/2024.

<sup>3</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Peggy Bailey, January 2020”Housing and Health Partners Can Work Together to Close the Housing Affordability Gap”.