

Modernization of the Older Coloradans Act

HB22-1035

Testimony to the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee

Andrea Kuwik, Senior Policy Analyst, May 26, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB22- 1035. My name is Andrea Kuwik, and I'm a senior policy analyst with the Bell Policy Center. The Bell Policy Center provides policymakers, advocates, and the public with reliable resources to create a practical policy agenda that promotes economic mobility for every Coloradan.

Along with a strong community of organizations throughout Colorado, the Bell has been examining the many impacts of our state's aging population for years. As we've documented through [various analyses](#), including in our most recent [State of Aging report](#), Colorado is the second fastest aging state in the country. This shift has profound consequences for all aspects of our communities. Our statewide demographic changes touch our families, health care system, labor market, economy, and state and local budgets. For example, our research shows:

- Older adults comprise the fastest growing segment of our workforce, with approximately [20 percent of all Coloradans 65 and older](#) participating in the labor market.
- [Eighteen percent of all Coloradans 15 and older](#) are providing some type of unpaid support to an older loved one, a responsibility many gladly take on, but which is often accompanied with worse physical, financial, and mental health outcomes for these caregivers.
- [Direct care workers](#)—comprised of personal care aides, certified nursing assistants, and home health aides—are one of the fastest growing segments of our workforce, due in large part to a growing older population in need of these services.

While just three examples, each of the above points demonstrate how our shifting demographics are impacting multiple facets of our communities.

As these changes continue to occur, Colorado will benefit from concerted statewide strategic coordination and long-term planning. For the past several years, the responsibility for this work has been shared by a collection of entities, including the Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging (SAPGA) and the Colorado Commission on Aging. Both of these groups have played an invaluable role in improving the systems and structures throughout our state supportive of older Coloradans. In fact, the Bell was a strong advocate for SAPGA's foundation and has had multiple staff members serve on the advisory group.

Now, however, is the time to consolidate and build upon the good work that has already been done by these and other groups. The many thoughtful recommendations these entities have

developed throughout the years can be more fully leveraged and implemented under the new structure this piece of legislation will create.

With HB22-1035, we have an opportunity to more fully meet the needs of older Coloradans and all those who are both supported by, and who support them. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit written testimony, and thank you to Representatives Bradfield and Young for supporting this effort. We encourage your support for this bill, and we're happy to take any questions.



02 February 2022

RE: HB22-1035 Modernization of the Older Coloradans Act

To: House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee

Dear Honorable Representatives:

Members of the Colorado Center for Aging (CCA) have been presented with the core content of HB22-1035 Modernization of the Older Coloradans Act. Our position is one of Strongly Support! We understand that there will be a number of 'consensus amendments' to be added for clarification and focus.

The intent and content of this bill is far from new to CCA. Our members and Board have participated with the Strategic Planning Group on Aging (SAPGA), and have been active with a number of the subgroups.

Many of the challenges for Older Coloradans are not unique to aging (e.g., financial security, affordable housing, transportation, broadband access, health care, non-discriminatory employment opportunities), but become more critical with aging. Hence the importance for collaboration across departments for the effective and efficient deployment of the State's limited discretionary budget.

Other challenges are in areas that areas more focused with aging (e.g., ageism, congregate care facilities, primary caregivers, geriatric training and specialists, Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement levels, community-based at-home assistance). Together these challenges are NOT short term.

Through your tenure, you have heard us address you as bills have touched on these challenges. (CCA was previously know as the Colorado Senior Lobby.) This bill (HB22-1035) addresses the longer term, strategic approach providing a structure for better effectiveness, efficiency, innovation and focus within Colorado's government.

We urge you to support this bill, and move it forward.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration!

Respectfully,

Phil Cernanec, President
Colorado Center for Aging
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The Colorado Center for Aging is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, with membership across Colorado, having the vision for a Colorado where older adults have full inclusion, appreciation, and respect, giving voice for Older Coloradans and being heard on the ranges of topics which will increase their own thriving, and the thriving of all Coloradoans.

February 4, 2022

MODERNIZATION OF THE OLDER COLORADAN'S ACT

Good morning Madame Chair and committee members.

I am Jean Nofles, volunteer state president of AARP of Colorado. I am also a member of the Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging, created by the General Assembly and approved by the Governor in 2015.

I am here in strong support of HB22-1035, Modernization of the Older Coloradan's Act.

AARP strongly supports recognizing change, restructuring, and expanding the current commission on aging to accommodate emerging needs and future needs, of an aging population on our state.

We know that modernization encourages the state to capitalize on the opportunities and address the challenges of aging, much as we must adapt our own lives to adjust to a changing world as we age.

We strongly support acknowledgement of disparities in our understanding and execution of elder programs and the need and promise to assess programs through a lens of equity and aging, considering the losses and denigrating impact of disparities on multicultural communities, over a lifetime.

We strongly support the realization that a modernizing endeavor such as this requires a director, staff, and an independent, diverse committee to keep the director and commission aware of the changing conditions in our multicultural communities.

We strongly support creating the lifelong Colorado initiative, a collection of state, regional, and local strategies that support aging in the community, in the department's state office on aging, to coordinate strategies and implementation of the plan with the commission, committee and key state agencies.

AARP, the largest national group working on behalf of the 50+ understands the need for change and relevance, even as we remain focused on the wellbeing of older people which, in turn, benefits the entire community.

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We ask a "Yes" on HB22-1035. Thank you.



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Representing >29,000 Coloradans

RE: HB22-1035 - SUPPORT

Members of the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee

Representatives,

The Colorado Alliance for Retired Americans is in strong support of HB22-1035, the Modernization of the "Older Coloradans Act."

This is a very important bill and years overdue especially since our Colorado senior population is growing so significantly.

Please support this bill.

Sincerely,

CARA Lobby Committee, Mona Moffatt, Sara Gagliardi, Sheila Leider, Ed Augden