



The Bell Policy Center

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Modernization of the Older Coloradans Act (HB22-1035) **Testimony to the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee**

Andrea Kuwik, Senior Policy Analyst • Feb 04, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to testify 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 testify, 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.