

**All Elders United for Justice**  
Testimony at February 9, 2024 meeting of  
State of Minnesota Legislative Task Force on Aging

Chair Klevorn and members of the Task Force. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to testify this morning.

I am Dr. Jonathan Rose, executive director for All Elders United for Justice, a nonprofit organization organized to fight Ageism and its devastating consequences, and to claim justice and equitable treatment for all elders in all areas of living.

Our organization is only a couple of years old, but collectively, our members have well over a thousand years of experience working on behalf of, and advocating for justice for seniors and their families. As our name implies, we represent elders from all demographic groups in all corners of the state.

As with any struggle for social justice, the factors that cause harm, and the paths to remedy are invariably interconnected. So, while we at All Elders address multiple issues such as Care Giving, Housing, and Transportation, we recognize that these challenges are all interconnected, and need to be addressed singularly, but with the recognition that outcomes in one area affect the others.

So, today, I want to talk briefly about Broadband equity. It has been established, without controversy, that access to affordable broadband has become a manifestly necessary for daily living, just as electricity and heat for the Minnesota winters are necessary utilities.

In May of 2023, the US Surgeon General, in talking about what he called "*The epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation*", said that one of what he labelled the six "Foundational Pillars" for the remedy for Loneliness and Isolation was the "*Reformation of Digital Environments*", that is, we need to provide equitable access for everyone.

We provide phones, smart phones, for indigent people on social assistance because smart phones are manifest necessities for communicating with the state's assistance agencies. We believe that Broadband access should be available to all at affordable prices, and we believe that, when necessary, indigent people should have reasonable access as well.

The future Broadband infrastructure is being built and expanded using taxpayer funds. Therefore, we the taxpayers are shareholders, and as shareholders we are entitled to the full benefits of ownership, including relief from prohibitive market prices, and we are entitled to equitable access to the technology.

As we continue to expand and improve Broadband services, it will be a travesty if we create access, but affordability excludes most seniors and people on low income.

Therefore, we are urging the legislature to

- 1) categorize Broadband as a necessary utility,
- 2) to affirm the taxpayers' ownership in the infrastructure, and
- 3) to regulate the services so that untenable costs are not imposed upon the elderly and the general public through the virtual monopolies that now exist.

Thank you very much.

Jonathan Rose.

*Executive Director, All Elders United for Justice.*