

Senate Committee on Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs

A meeting of the Senate Committee on Senior Citizens & Veterans Affairs was held Thursday, June 10, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. in room 100 of the Farnum Building.

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m.

Members present: Senators Pappageorge, Garcia, Olshove and Basham

Members excused: Senator Allen

Senator Pappageorge called the meeting to order.

Senator Pappageorge welcomed guests to the committee who were visiting the Capitol for Older Michiganians' Day.

Senator Pappageorge put forth before the committee Senate Bills 1327-1335 (Elder-Friendly Communities package).

Fred Schaible, from the Senate Majority Policy Office, testified to explain the legislation. Mr. Schaible explained that the package was a result of looking at what other states were doing to attract and retain seniors, as well as looking at the current statutes in Michigan. Mr. Schaible then detailed what each bill did in the package.

Jim McGuire, representing Older Michiganians' Day, testified in support of the package. Mr. McGuire noted that the bills were consistent with the platform of Older Michiganians' Day and would make the state competitive with other states that are trying to attract seniors to locate in their communities. Mr. McGuire further stated his support for the heated sidewalks component in the Downtown Development Act, and also mentioned the CAPS (Certified Aging in Place Specialists) program as something that could be worked into the package. Mr. McGuire did express some reservations about Senate Bill 1335, but stated he would like to review the bill further.

Senator Olshove asked Mr. McGuire if he could use Royal Oak as an example of what the package would facilitate in that community five or ten years down the line. Mr. McGuire responded that the package could help with the heated sidewalks for the city as well as help improve the downtown areas and promote economic vitality year round.

Kendra Everett, representing Senator Cameron Brown, supported the bills and offered to answer questions the committee might have on SB 1335 (Senator Brown's bill).

Dawn Dyer Magretta, representing the Presbyterian Villages of Michigan, testified in support of the bills. Ms. Magretta stated that elder-friendly community standards were important not only for economic purposes, but also for safety and health reasons. Senator Basham asked where Ms. Margetta got her statistics that seniors contribute \$32 billion in spending per year from. Ms. Margetta explained that it came from the information shared by the Older Michigianians' Day organizers.

Andy Schor, representing the Michigan Municipal League (MML), testified in general support of the package although he did share some concerns on certain aspects. Mr. Schor informed the committee that members of his organization had raised concerns regarding the MSHDA portion, Planning and Zoning portion, and SB 1335's requirement of a pop-up tax exemption rather than option. Mr. Schor stated that he believed these concerns could be worked out on the bills.

Senator Garcia commented that he appreciated seeing the MML here to testify on the package.

Senator Pappageorge noted that this was the first hearing on the concept, and that a cost analysis and impact analysis would need to be done in the future regarding this legislation.

Mary Ablan, representing the Area Agency on Aging, testified that she was very supportive of the legislation. Ms. Ablan thanked the committee for holding a hearing today and for giving needed attention to elder friendly communities.

Tina Abbate Marzoff, representing the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, testified in support of the legislation. Ms. Marzoff informed the committee that the idea to promote CAPS came from Livingston County. Ms. Marzoff also wished to answer Senator Olshove's question from before, stating that with this package communities would look more like Florida communities in ten years. Ms. Marzoff explained that this meant more elderly people would be walking and driving non-traditional vehicles around and into town, that crosswalk signals would last longer in duration, and that buildings and parking lots would take elderly citizens into consideration in their construction and remodeling.

Greg Piakowski, representing the Area Agency on Aging in Traverse City, testified in support of the package. Mr. Piakowski stated that accessibility friendly communities are important for economic development.

Doug Williams, representing the Commanders Group, American Legion, and Marine Corps League, was neutral on the legislation and did not wish to testify.

Senator Pappageorge stated that he believed the package was onto something, and that he was happy to see mention that this package would benefit both the old and the young.

There being no further business to discuss, Senator Pappageorge adjourned the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren K. Michalak
Committee Clerk

Jason Allen
Chairman

Date Approved by Committee