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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Older Women in Minnesota Can't Make Ends Meet

New Report Highlights Economic Realities of Older Minnesotan Women

ST. PAUL, MN – Women in Minnesota, and across the country, are struggling to get by in retirement. One out of five older Minnesotans, the majority of whom are women, are living on Social Security alone and more than 60% have incomes below the poverty level. These realities and solutions to these challenges were discussed at a forum on Wednesday, where the release of the Office on the Economic Status of Women's research report guided the conversation.

The report's findings show the importance of Social Security, assets and pensions to an older woman's economic security. Panelists included experts on aging who discussed issues such as employment and housing status and the innovative Golden Girl Homes, AccountAbility, and Vital Aging Network organizations that originated in Minnesota. They also addressed special concerns of women of color, women with disabilities, and Minnesota's large immigrant and refugee community. Overall, panelists agree that more must be done to improve the lives of low-income elders and their families.

According to the Minnesota Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index), a county-by-county measure of economic security for seniors over the age of 65, an elder renter needs about \$20,000 a year to age in place. An older Minnesotan woman, however, living on Social Security alone has an income of just over \$11,000.

The Minnesota Elder Economic Security Initiative™ (MinnEESI), led by the Minnesota Women's Consortium, with national backing from Wider Opportunities for Women, seeks to educate state advocates, policymakers and the public on the real cost of living for retirees in Minnesota.

"This new report gives all of us a snapshot of the predicament of many older women trying to pay their bills in the face of rising costs and falling incomes," said Bonnie Watkins, Executive Director of the Minnesota Women's Consortium. "Change at the state level is important to ensuring more women can live all their years with dignity."

The Economic Status of Older Women report is available online at:

<http://www.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/oesw/fs/OlderWomenMN2010.pdf>

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Minnesota Women's Consortium

The Minnesota Women's Consortium is the only one of its kind in the country. As a statewide collaboration of 170+ member organizations, the Consortium serves as a resource center to achieve equality and justice for women and girls. Since 1981,

Minnesota women have come to the Consortium with concerns and proposed solutions. The Consortium has supported and helped many vital organizations that work toward heightened awareness on women's issues, sound public policy, and ultimately, full equality. For more information about the Minnesota Women's Consortium visit <http://www.mnwomen.org>.

Wider Opportunities for Women

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) works nationally and in its home community of Washington DC to achieve economic independence and equality of opportunity for women and their families at all stages of life. For over 45 years, WOW has been a leader in the areas of nontraditional employment, job training and education, welfare to work and workforce development policy. Since 1995, WOW has been committed to the self-sufficiency of women and their families through the national Family Economic Security (FES) Project. Through FES, WOW reframed the national debate on social policies and programs from one that focuses on poverty to one that focuses on what families need to make ends meet. Building on FES, WOW expanded to meet its intergenerational mission of economic independence for women and families at all stages of life with the National Elder Economic Security Initiative. For more information on WOW programs visit <http://www.wowonline.org>.