



December 10, 2019

Dr. Mark Ghaly Director
California Health and Human Services Agency
1600 9th Street, Suite 460
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Ghaly,

I respectfully submit this letter of recommendation on behalf of Village Movement California, a statewide coalition 43 villages, representing 7000+ individual members and volunteers. Villages are membership organizations led by older adults that connect people to the resources, services and supports they need to age well in the places they call home.

I urge you to include expansion of the village model of peer to peer community building in the Master Plan for Aging as a core health and wellness strategy. Support for the village model is included in findings and recommendations submitted by the California Collaborative for Long Term Services and Supports¹ and SCAN Foundation².

Villages' reliance on vetted, intergenerational volunteers and governance by older adults themselves makes them a cost-effective intervention for engaging thousands of older adults who neither qualify for means tested, public services nor are able to afford to pay for services themselves – the “Forgotten Middle.”³ Village Movement California is ready to scale this powerful model to meet the needs of California’s growing, diverse older adult population.

California’s villages directly address Goals 1, 2, and 3 of the Master Plan for Aging’s 4 goals:

¹ Creating a California Master Plan for Aging, <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CCLTSS-Master-Plan-Recommendations.pdf>

² Elevating Voices, October 2019, <https://www.thescanfoundation.org/media/2019/10/2019-10-Elevating-Voices-Strategic-Recommendations.pdf>

³ Pearson et al, The Forgotten Middle, April 2019, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05233>

Goal 1: We will be able to live where we choose as we age and have the help we and our families need to do so.

Objective 1.1: Californians will have access to the help we need to live in the homes and communities we choose as we age.

Villages provide the infrastructure for social care: the services and supports that address the social determinants of health.⁴ Reliable door through door transportation, grocery shopping, laundry, technology support, fall risk reduction, de-cluttering and downsizing, and referrals and discounts to licensed services are common offerings across villages. Recent Public Safety Power Shutoffs and increased fire danger have prompted villages to amplify their emergency preparedness plans and strengthen connections with the local emergency services and senior continuum. Village members typically are older adults who are not known to County and City departments or investor owned utilities. These village efforts expand the communities' person centered, nimble response to dangers faced by older adults.

Goal 2: We will live in and be engaged in communities that are age-friendly, dementia friendly, and disability-friendly

Objective 2.1: California's neighborhoods will have the built environment to fully and meaningfully include older adults, people with disabilities, and people of all ages.

Throughout California, villages lead and implement Age Friendly Community initiatives. Ashby Village, located in the East Bay, partnered with the City of Berkeley to create the Age-Friendly Berkeley Continuum, a ten-year plan for addressing housing, transportation, services and supports, and social cohesion. Ashby Village serves as the Continuum's fiscal agent, and its director is a Village founder and Board Member. The Berkeley Continuum was awarded the 2019 Innovation Award from the SCAN Foundation and Milken Institute for the Future of Aging. Sausalito Village pioneered its city's Age Friendly initiative and continues its involvement by implementing the transportation program.

Objective 2.2: Californians will age with lifelong opportunities for social and civic engagement, volunteering, learning, and leadership.

Villages are organized and governed by older adults, and they provide rich volunteer opportunities in the areas of program development and implementation, governance, service provision, and civic engagement. In 2019, Village Movement California members performed over 100,000 hours and positively impacted thousands of lives.

⁴ Health Care's Blind Side, December 2011. <http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2011/12/health-care-s-blind-side.html>

Each village provides educational programming on topics determined by village members: issues related to planning for aging, health and wellness, the arts, writing, culture, and more. In 2019, Village Movement California's members offered 1000 educational and social programs.

Goal 3: We will maintain our health and well-being as we age. We will live in communities that have access to services and care that optimize health and quality of life.

Objective 3.1: Californians will live in communities with policies and programs that promote well-being throughout our lifespans.

Village Movement California is a coalition of intentional communities that build social connections in the face of an epidemic of social isolation and loneliness. Villages build purpose and meaning through volunteer opportunities, educational and social programming, that facilitate community. The positive health outcomes of social integration, purpose and meaning are well-documented⁵ and provide the necessary foundation for health and emotional well-being.

Objective 3.2: Californians will have access to quality, affordable, and person-centered healthcare through delivery systems that are age-friendly, dementia-friendly, and disability-friendly.

Addressing the social determinants of health is an essential component of an age friendly healthcare delivery system. Villages' infrastructure for social care should be a component of such care throughout California. During the first half of 2020, Village Movement California will work with Anne Tumlinson Innovations, the nationally renowned healthcare consultant, to identify healthcare partnerships that support expansion of villages across California. Changes in Medicare Advantage and the emergence of Accountable Care Organizations provide opportunities for the expansion of village throughout California to address social determinants and realize healthcare savings.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Village Movement California is partnering with organizations led by diverse community leaders to build an equitable and inclusive movement. Village Movement California is partnering with SAGE, Sistahs Aging with Grace and Elegance to learn how a village might be designed and implemented to meet the needs and aspirations of African American older adult women in Los Angeles. Village Movement California has been certified by SAGECare as a culturally competent organization serving LGBT+ older adults.

⁵ Julianne Holt Lunstad, American Psychological Association, October 18, 2017, <https://www.apa.org/members/content/holt-lunstad-loneliness-social-connections>

Village Movement California's work to secure healthcare coverage/reimbursement will support its work to serve a diverse older adult population.

Summary

Villages provide a safety net for the forgotten middle – people who will not be able to afford housing and health care – and who could place exponential demands on the public service sector if new solutions are not identified. Villages are a strong social force for changing the way we regard, engage, and serve one quarter of California's population. The entire family and community are healthier when older adults are included, connected and cared for.

I encourage you to include villages in the Master Plan for Aging with the goal of increasing their number in all 58 California counties over the next ten years.

Sincerely,



Charlotte Dickson
Executive Director

Attachment: Map and List of villages