



October 15, 2021

Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary
California Health and Human Services Agency
600 9th St. Suite 460
Sacramento, CA, 95814

Mark Beckley, Chief Deputy Director
California Department of Aging
1300 National Driv, Suite #200
Sacramento, CA 95834-1992

Dear Secretary Ghaly and Deputy Director Beckley,

Village Movement California welcomes the opportunity to submit suggestions about the proposed Hubs and Spokes Network for Aging and Disability. The broad reorganization of existing services with a vision towards integration of healthcare, social care, and social services, is one we endorse. We believe the California Master Plan for Aging should guide this reorganization.

Village Movement California (VMC) is the statewide coalition of 43 villages, representing 10,000+ members, volunteers, and close family members caring for older adults. 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. 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.” This population comprises the majority of village members who traditionally are not served by the publicly funded aging services network until they “spend down” to enroll in Medicaid. This unsustainable trend is driving state efforts to design a social insurance program to cover long term care. It is unclear when the program will become functional. In the meantime, millions of Californians who have substantial needs for social care remain outside the aging services continuum.

Village Movement California advocates for an expansion of the regional aging service networks to serve this “missing middle” and recommends that villages be included as a

provider in the hubs and spokes model. As a spoke provider, villages will educate moderate and middle income Californians about the transitions of aging, offer social connections to inoculate them from isolation and loneliness, assist them in planning and decision-making about options for care, and provide support with IADLs to enable aging at home. It is typical for moderate and middle income older adults not to know where to get supports and services when they are needed. Villages connect this population to public, private, and non-profit systems of care. When these connections aren't made, over-utilization of the healthcare system, local emergency services, and poor health outcomes ensue.

The proposed hubs and spokes structure is modeled after San Francisco's Department of Disability and Aging Services (SF DAS). SF DAS had the foresight in 2013 to fund three villages, recognizing that the growth of the older adult population in San Francisco County requires attention to all those who cannot pay privately for supports and services. Recommendations for modernization in the New York Office for Aging explicitly includes the "Village Technical Assistance Center and Village Movement." Modernization in California should result in the same.

Currently villages operate in 17 California counties and PSAs, and new villages are being planned in three additional counties and PSAs. VMC's recommendations for the Master Plan for Aging stated a five-year goal of serving 29 counties, and a ten-year goal of serving all 58. The village model is included in the Master Plan for Aging under Goal Three, "Inclusion and Equity, Not Isolation. Promote and adapt village models of volunteerism and services to reflect the strengths of California's diverse communities." Village Movement California is ready and able to scale this cost-effective, person-centered model to meet the needs of California's growing and diverse older adult population, and partner with providers in the hubs and spokes models to extend vital support to a greater number of Californians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlotte Dickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Charlotte Dickson
Executive Director