



October 14, 2021

Ms. Susan DeMarois  
Director  
California Department of Aging  
1300 National Drive, Suite #200  
Sacramento, CA 95834-1992

**RE: Hubs & Spokes Initiative: Restructuring of the Statewide Area Agencies on Aging Network**

Dear Ms. DeMarois:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I must respectfully raise concerns with the currently proposed scenarios for restructuring the statewide Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) network as outlined in the Hubs and Spokes Initiative. RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county.

RCRC appreciates the work of the Department of Aging on the Master Plan for Aging. Better coordination of services at the state level will lead to better access to those services at the local level. The Master Plan for Aging provides an opportunity to improve collaboration and leverage county-based services to meet the needs of older adults in all communities.

Rural counties have unique challenges such as less extensive public transportation networks, fewer non-profits to partner with, limited county resources, geographically isolated communities, and a shortage of medical specialists. Rural counties have a long history in problem-solving challenges through regional approaches, including Joint Powers Agreements between counties to create a multi-county local area agency on aging. This structure has allowed rural counties to work more effectively within their service areas to pool resources, work across county lines to provide services efficiently, and share the administrative burden. Often, rural counties utilize the same regional community-based organizations and healthcare resources on various services making multi-county AAA a natural fit.

Ms. Susan DeMarois  
Hubs & Spokes Initiative  
October 14, 2021  
Page 2

RCRC feels strongly that each county should have the freedom to decide for itself if the existing Planning and Service Area (PSA) works best for their community or whether it wants to form its own agency on aging. We recommend the Department of Aging continue to allow regionalization as reflected in the current PSA map. The regional PSA approach in rural communities is cost-effective and allows our counties to serve more seniors with greater quality. Additionally, should adjustments to current PSAs occur, resulting in an existing multi-county AAA being broken apart, RCRC request the Department of Aging consult directly with impacted counties to determine if they have the resources and capacity to assume responsibility for those programs.

RCRC strongly urges the Department of Aging to support the existing service structure in rural AAAs, which reflects the Hub and Spokes model and “No wrong door” person-centered approach. Counties should retain the ability to have flexibility in providing services to best meet the unique needs of the aging population that each county serves.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jamie R. Hubert", with a stylized, flowing script.

Legislative Advocate

cc: Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency