



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 1st, 2024

SB875: Miriam Kelty Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program

Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, Members of the Committee,

I am here today to introduce Senate Bill 875, the Miriam Kelty Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program. This legislation presents an opportunity to address the needs of Maryland's aging population by providing seniors with necessary services and fostering social connection.

Senate Bill 875 seeks to establish this critical program within the Maryland Department of Aging. This initiative aims to centralize administrative tasks for local volunteer-led organizations known as "villages," which support community members choosing to age in place. Villages play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for seniors by fostering social connections through programming efforts and coordinating volunteer help at home.

The pilot program outlined in Senate Bill 875 serves several essential purposes. It seeks to learn, test, and develop best practices using a hub and spoke model for village administration, lessening the burden on volunteers and coordinating resources to maximize the reach of services provided. Village volunteers help their senior neighbors by driving them to doctor's appointments, the pharmacy, or the grocery store, and by shoveling snow from their driveway or gardening. This is especially critical help if seniors don't have any family nearby. The value of the service time that people are willingly giving to take care of their community members, if quantified in dollars, would be tremendous, and our counties and our state are saving significant dollars through this village movement.

As the senior population continues to increase in Maryland, initiatives such as the Miriam Kelty Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program are essential for addressing the unique challenges faced by older adults and promoting their well-being and social inclusion.

Villages are currently facing the challenge of managing the inevitable administrative tasks (such as fundraising, managing finances, and more). Volunteers are often unable or unwilling to take on that work. To address this issue, seven villages have come together to form a consortium and pilot a hub and spoke model. This model will centralize administrative tasks so that individual

villages within the consortium are freed up to do their core work. It's the first time that this is being tried in our state.

After the three-year pilot, our state will get a report from this consortium on the lessons they've learned that can be leveraged state-wide. Villages are already beginning to form throughout our state, and are reaching out for guidance from more experienced villages that are part of this pilot. By forming this hub and spoke, the experienced villages believe that they will have more time to assist other villages as they form across the state.

There is a friendly amendment to this bill, it makes explicit that the funds for this program will be transferred from the Department of Aging to the Montgomery County Village Consortium. This was a request that originated from the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and was voted on favorably by the Health and Government Operations subcommittee.

This legislation represents a significant step forward in supporting Maryland's aging population and fostering vibrant, connected communities for seniors across the state. Thank you for your time today, and I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 875.