

TO: House Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: LeadingAge Maryland
SUBJECT: Senate Bill 875, Miriam Kelty Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program Elderly
DATE: March 21, 2024
POSITION: Favorable

LeadingAge Maryland supports Senate Bill 875, Miriam Kelty Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program

Elderly

LeadingAge Maryland is a community of more than 140 not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients through continuing care retirement communities, affordable senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes and home and community-based services. Members of LeadingAge Maryland provide health care, housing, and services to more than 20,000 older persons each year. Our mission is to be the trusted voice for aging in Maryland, and our vision is that Maryland is a state where older adults have access to the services they need, when they need them, in the place they call home. We partner with consumers, caregivers, researchers, public agencies, faith communities and others who care about aging in Maryland. LeadingAge supports innovative community-based care models that promote healthy aging-in-place and an intervention for social isolation and loneliness in older adults.

This bill establishes the Miriam Kelty Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program in the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA). The goal of the pilot program is to support “villages” that seek to take advantage of operational proficiencies and existing systems, knowledge, skills, and resources to expand services to more residents in the geographic region. MDOA must select the Montgomery County Village Consortium to implement the pilot program for a three-year period. For fiscal 2026 through 2028, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$80,000 for the pilot program. Funds must be used for (1) employing an operations manager; (2) fundraising; (3) marketing and outreach; and (4) programming. By September 1, 2027, the Montgomery County Village Consortium must submit a final report to MDOA on the implementation of the pilot program

The Village Model is a promising model for the care of older adults in the future. It is consumer-driven and prioritizes aging-in-place. That it is embedded within the community contributes to the model's sustainability. It also promotes engagement with the community which can be a protective factor against social isolation and loneliness in older adults. Social relationships have been demonstrated as an important indicator of positive health outcomes in older adults. Older adults who actively participate in their Villages experience improvements in

social and civic engagement, quality of life, and confidence in believing they can age in their own homes.

Successful communities are also active in other parts of the state, such as Baltimore County. LeadingAge Maryland particularly supports the bill's provisions in identifying the capacity of each hub, including geographic and population capacity along with developing recommendations regarding how best to support interested and diverse and underserved communities with the development of villages.

For these reasons, LeadingAge Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 875.

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