

Testimony

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US Administration on Aging Listening Sessions

Hello, my name is Leane Marchese. I am the Executive Director of ElderHelp, a community based non-profit organization in San Diego that is focused on helping seniors remain living in their own homes communities and neighborhoods. I am also a Policy Fellow with the Women's Foundation of California. In this role as a Fellow I am working on a bill at the state level, AB 2114, which will require triple Area Agencies on Aging to use the Elder Economic Index when putting together their area plans. Paul Downey mentioned this in his remarks. The Elder Economic Index is a valuable tool that should be included in all data based decision making and programming surrounding the Older American Act Authorization. We would also encourage AOA to encourage the California Department of Aging to support AB 2114.

ElderHelp is an organization that provides home and community based services to low and moderate income seniors. Our primary program is the Concierge Club. The Concierge Club provides comprehensive and coordinated services to seniors who want to remain living in their own homes and communities for an affordable membership price. For those who fall below the Elder Economic Index, the membership fee is subsidized through fundraising and for those with higher incomes the membership price is tiered according to income.

Concierge Club member benefits include: wrap around case management, transportation, home share services, health and wellness, grocery shopping, socialization, home repair, vetted providers, home care and a variety of other practical and needed services and support. The Concierge Club is currently serving 200 seniors with nearly 30,000 hours of services which are provided by a small staff of caring professionals and a corps of over 400 compassionate and dedicated volunteer caregivers. A comparable set of services would cost 60% more for a for-profit home care agency which is simply out of reach for seniors who need help at home. The Concierge Club was recently mentioned in an issue brief distributed by the California Healthcare Foundation as an innovation in Community Aging.

The Concierge Club was crafted out of the village movement pioneered in the Beacon Hill area in Boston. Villages provide a one stop shop for all a senior may need to stay at home. All village models have some basic tenets:

- Consumer Choice
- Unique to the community they serve
- Centralized and comprehensive
- Maximize community assets like volunteers and existing services

- Creates non-traditional social supports
- Leverages private funding and fee based structure
- Sustainable—adding a share of cost for higher income seniors

Members feel an increased sense of independence and ability to remain in their own homes through participation in the Concierge Club. The Concierge Club is cost-effective by delaying and averting nursing home costs and spend-downs on Medi-Cal, saving each member \$1,600 annually on home care services (totaling \$1.8 million for all members within 3 years), and discounting up to 25% of additional services.

I would like to request that the US Administration on Aging look more into these Village programs when reauthorizing the Older Americans Act. Supporting innovations like the Concierge Club in demonstration programs may prove cost effective and deliver outcomes that are substantial to help seniors remain at home.

Thank you and good luck in your listening sessions.

Leane