



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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SB 875

DATE: March 1, 2024

SPONSOR: Senator Kelly

ASSIGNED TO: Finance

CONTACT PERSON: Leslie Frey (leslie.frey@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS (Department of Health and Human Services)

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

Senate Bill 875 establishes the Miriam Kelty Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program in the Maryland Department of Aging to develop best practices using a hub and spoke model for Village administration; centralize administrative tasks; coordinate resources and operations to maximize service delivery efficiency; support new and developing Villages; and build social connection and combat loneliness for seniors aging in place. The bill requires the Montgomery County Village Consortium to establish a 3-year strategic plan for the pilot program and submit an annual report to the Department of Aging regarding the implementation of the strategic plan. Under the bill, the Governor must appropriate \$80,000 for the pilot program in fiscal years 2026, 2027, and 2028.

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services respectfully requests an amendment to clarify that the funding provided under the bill should be allocated by the Department of Aging to the Montgomery County Village Consortium to satisfy the requirements of the bill. The Montgomery County Village Consortium is an independent non-profit and not a part of Montgomery County Government.

Senate Bill 875 addresses two challenges facing Villages¹- sustainability and limited ability to conduct outreach to diverse communities. Some Villages find that it is difficult to enlist enough volunteer power to serve as administrators. They have difficulty retaining leadership and without stable operations are at risk of ceasing operations. By centralizing staff to perform administrative functions, Villages can turn their attention to the activities that are key to Village work, such as building relationships and providing volunteer help to members. Additionally, Villages are very interested in supporting the growth of Villages in diverse and low-income communities. This is an ongoing challenge because establishing a Village requires effort, time, know-how, and resources. The Montgomery County Village Consortium will make the start-up process much easier by providing a nonprofit infrastructure that is already in place, thus reducing barriers and increasing equity of access to the Village concept for non-white and low-income older adults.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services respectfully requests a favorable report with the clarifying amendment to Senate Bill 875 as it is an innovative way to build infrastructure to support aging-in-place for older adults and enhance the continuum of care for older adults in the community.

¹ Under the bill, Villages are defined as: "local, volunteer-led organizations that aim to support community members who choose to age in place, including by: (1) fostering social connections through activities and events; and (2) coordinating volunteer help at home using the neighbor-helping-neighbor model."