



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Date: March 21, 2024

Bill Number: **SB875**

Bill Title: Miriam Kilty Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program

Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee

**MDOA Position: FAVORABLE**

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The Department of Aging (MDOA) submits this letter of support for Senate Bill 875 - Miriam Kilty Aging and Senior Social Connection Hub and Spoke Pilot Program.

The Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) serves as Maryland's State Unit of Aging, administering federal funding for core programs, overseeing the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) network at the local level that provides services, and planning for Maryland's older adult population. Pursuant to a recent Executive Order, in January 2024, MDOA launched the Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative,<sup>1</sup> which will build upon existing efforts across state agencies, private and philanthropic sectors and other stakeholders to tackle real-life challenges throughout the lifespan, taking a whole-of-life and whole-of-government approach. Key goals of Longevity-Ready Maryland are for all Marylanders to lead lives that are healthy, financially secure, socially connected, purposeful.

The village model has emerged over the past several years as an innovative, cost-efficient way to support older adults in their own homes. Villages support community members by providing volunteer-led key services like transportation to appointments, assistance with grocery shopping, home repair, and social engagement activities. Villages are typically established as 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations and sometimes charge membership dues to provide services.<sup>2</sup> There are currently 42 established villages in Maryland to the best of MDOA's current knowledge. MDOA currently funds some Maryland villages, including the Montgomery County Village Consortium (a non-profit collaboration of multiple villages), through two state funding streams, including a

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<sup>1</sup> See, Maryland Department of Aging: Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative *available at:* <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/LRM.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> See, AARP, "The Village Model: Current Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities," *available at:*



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statutorily-authorized Aging in Place annual grant fund. MDOA is strongly committed to this model as it is a person-centered, volunteer-driven, low-cost way to keep older Marylanders healthy, well-supported in their homes.

Conducting this three-year pilot program to growing Maryland's village community fits perfectly with MDOA's Longevity-Ready Maryland Initiative's goals and has MDOA's strong support. This consortium will share valuable best practices and lessons learned for village operations and strategy in the future while supporting the establishment of new villages in diverse, underserved communities statewide. This work will serve as an excellent extension of MDOA's existing village support and engagement statewide.

For these reasons, the Department of Aging respectfully urges a favorable report for SB875. If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Nunez, Legislative Director, at [andrea.nunez@maryland.gov](mailto:andrea.nunez@maryland.gov) or (443) 414-8183.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carmel Roques".

Carmel Roques

Secretary

Maryland Department of Aging