

*Dr. Richard H. Machemer, Jr.*



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Live with excitement...seek to spread life. To destroy is easy; to build, the difficult challenge. Speak with joy, with love, with great enthusiasm. Most will listen with their ears and hear the words. Some will hear with their heart and live the meaning. Be well. RHM, Amelia Island, FL, 3/2003.

July 14, 2022

The Honorable Adam J. Bello  
Office of the County Executive, Monroe County  
110 County Office Building  
39 West Main Street  
Rochester, NY 14614

Dear County Executive Bello:

I am writing to strongly and enthusiastically support Lifespan of Greater Rochester's proposal to seek funding from the Monroe County American Rescue Plan Act to serve at-risk adults who are older through the very successful Community Care Connections (CCC) Program. The CCC Program addresses the numerous social determinants of health in ways that allow vulnerable individuals to be able to successfully connect the social services and the vital health services they need.

My support for Lifespan's proposal to expand the Community Care Connections Program comes from several perspectives. I have been a Board member at Lifespan for more than 40 years. I know the Agency well, understand the immense impact that our programs have of the thousands of persons we serve each year and have the utmost confidence in and respect for the extremely talented leadership at Lifespan. This support extends to the incredibly committed and hard-working staff persons who carry out this important work in our community. My decades of Board and Committee work in health care – acute, long-term, and Internal Medical Residency Programs at Park Ridge, Unity, and now at Rochester Regional Health – have shown me how health care works (or does not work well) from the "inside." My many years as a faculty person at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry have further demonstrated – from an educational and service delivery perspective – why the Community Care Connections Program is so vital to persons who, because of age and social needs, are at greater risk of serious health outcomes in the traditional "siloeed" approach to providing medical care.

Community Care Connections integrates a variety of systems of care. The current siloeed medical care is especially detrimental to persons who are older, who may have a number of co-morbidities, and who experience a range of negative social impacts (health

disparities) on their health and daily function. In 2011, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study of this siloing that's been so much a part of medical and social care called this, "Health Care's Blind Side." The Foundation concluded that "85 percent [of physicians surveyed] believe that unmet social needs – such as access to nutritious food, reliable transportation, and adequate housing – are leading directly to worse health for all Americans. This is health care's blind side: Within the current health care system, physicians do not have the time or sufficient staff support to address patients' social needs."

Since this 2011 report, a great deal of research has been done and much has been published about the impact of social determinants of health and the resulting health disparities on the function, quality of living, and longevity of persons who are older and who are already at heightened risk. We know with certainty that appropriate housing, nutritious food, available transportation, safe neighborhoods, to name just a few of these determinants, have measurable impacts on the health of an individual. For many adults who are older, it is daunting to navigate the social service system and health care systems. They therefore, go without these necessary integrated services and kinds of care they require, and their functional conditions deteriorate over time. If we do not intervene, most of these individuals require more expensive long-term care alternatives than otherwise would have been necessary.

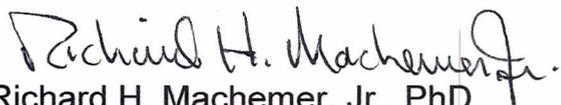
The Community Care Connections Program has demonstrated that integrating traditional community-based aging services with medical systems of care will positively affect the cost, quality of care and of living for older persons, as well as physician and patient satisfaction. The New York Academy of Medicine served as an independent evaluator of the CCC Program and conclusively showed the significant value of this integrated service provision model to the persons served by this program. These data were published in the journal, *Preventive Medicine*, in late 2020. The findings showed for example, a dramatic decline in the number of hospitalizations and many fewer emergency room visits and observations. These declines in health care service utilization were a direct result of supporting the social needs of adults who are older. The NYS Academy of Medicine also surveyed older adults, their family caregivers, and the medical community. All three groups of individuals indicated this program is making a positive difference in the lives of the older adults to and for whom they are providing services and direct care.

The Community Care Connects Program has made a significant and verifiable positive impact on the well-being of older adults in our community. Supporting the continuation and expansion of this program will provide these integrated services to 625 older adults and provide much-needed positive impacts on the health of these at-risk individuals. This will be especially evident in persons who now experience health care disparities for reasons that this program is specifically designed to address. Lifespan's current work in connecting social services and health services is already impressive; this funding will significantly enhance the scope and reach of this important work.

It is from these several perspectives that I fully and enthusiastically support providing funding from the Monroe County American Rescue Plan Act to support Lifespan's Community Care Connects Program of integration of health care and supportive social service programs.

Thank you for this opportunity to show my support for this program and to express my thanks for all you do to support and enhance the lives of the people in our County.

Sincerely,

  
Richard H. Macheemer, Jr., PhD