



July 18, 2022

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

Dear County Executive Bello:

I am writing to enthusiastically support Lifespan of Greater Rochester's proposal to expand the Community Care Connections Program through the ARPA initiative. Funding from this mechanism would allow Lifespan to increase its capacity to bring this cutting-edge program to more vulnerable older adults across Monroe County.

Community Care Connections works to address the social determinants of health so many older adults face by connecting at-risk individuals with needed benefits and other health services. In this program skilled multidisciplinary team members employ a model that integrates health and social service systems of care. Health care alone is inadequate for addressing the needs of vulnerable older adults who often have multiple psychosocial risk factors that increase risk for hospitalization and health disparities. This integrated care approach addresses the unmet social needs that physicians recognize as critical to preserving the health and function of older adults (e.g., nutritious food, adequate and safe housing, and socialization) yet do not have the time or staff to assess and manage in the primary care setting.

A lot has been written in the domain of public health about the social determinants of health. We know that housing, food, transportation, safe neighborhoods, etc. impact the health of an individual. For many older adults, it is daunting to navigate the social service system and health care systems of care, so they go without, and their conditions deteriorate over time. If we do not intervene, most of these individuals require more expensive long-term care alternatives.

Community Care Connections has been in operation for several years and it has been evaluated rigorously by an independent evaluator, the New York Academy of Medicine. The data have shown that integrating traditional community-based aging services with medical systems of care positively affect the cost, quality, as well as physician and patient satisfaction. Through this evaluation, Lifespan has proven that supporting the social needs of older adults resulted in reduced hospitalizations, emergency room visits and observations. The evaluators also

surveyed older adults, their family caregivers, and the medical community and all three groups indicated that this program is making a positive difference in the lives of older adults.

As a former member of the Advisory Board that guided the development of the Community Care Connections pilot program, I am proud not only of its successful outcomes but also of the important role it continues to play in bridging a critical gap in our siloed systems of care. I firmly believe that we should expand programs that work, and Lifespan has a proven track record of achieving what it sets out to accomplish. I offer my full support and assistance to Lifespan in this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carol Podgorski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carol Podgorski, PhD, MPH, MS
Professor of Psychiatry
Department of Psychiatry