



COMMISSION ON AGING

May 26, 2021

Carrie L. Nieman MD, MPH
Departments of Otolaryngology-HNS
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Cochlear Center for Hearing & Public Health
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Baltimore, Maryland

Dear Dr. Nieman,

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging in strong support of the proposed project, “Extending Capacity for Affordable, Accessible Hearing Care through Older Adult Peer Mentorship.” Our organization has identified age-related hearing loss as a priority area for our county given how common it is among older adults, its potential impact on healthy aging, and how few older adults actually receive hearing care. In fact, we held a recent public forum where hearing loss was consistently raised as a concern, particularly in relationship to its contribution to social isolation and loneliness, another priority area for our county. Your prior work in Baltimore with the HEARS intervention is inspiring and work we are excited to expand to Montgomery County. The Commission on Aging plays a powerful role in our older adult communities and programs like HEARS that build capacity locally for ear and hearing care are needed and an excellent complement to existing evidence-based programs.

Montgomery County is home to a large and growing population of older adults, one that is becoming increasingly diverse and where a significant number of older residents live on a low- to moderate-income. With rising housing costs, hearing aids, which can be the 3rd most expensive purchase for older adults, behind house and car, is out of the question for many Montgomery County residents. For these reasons and others, a community-delivered approach to hearing care that is affordable and accessible is needed and the primary reason for our organization’s support of the proposed project.

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging (CoA) is authorized by the Older Americans Act, P.L. 116-131, and was established by Montgomery County in 1974 to advise County government on the needs, interests and issues of Older Adult residents, and to advocate on their behalf at the local, state and national levels. Montgomery County supports more than 150,000 older adults through their programing, support services, and senior centers. As part of their programs, there are several volunteer programs for older adults and networks, such as the 50+ Volunteer Network where we anticipate substantial interest in recruiting a number of older adult peer mentors for this project. In executing the trial, we are well positioned to leverage our community network of services and programs to aid in recruitment efforts. It would be our pleasure to work with you and your research team as well as the other AAAs throughout Maryland in executing this project. In addition, we would be happy to provide representation to serve on the Community Advisory board throughout the project. The HEARS approach is one that complements our current efforts and we are particularly interested in seeing programs like this expand nationally. We are eager to help make that a reality.

Sincerely,

Barbara Selter sb

Barbara Selter, Chair

Montgomery County Commission on Aging

Department of Health and Human Services

401 Hungerford Drive, 4th Floor, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 240-777-1120, FAX 240-777-1436

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs