

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF AGING EQUITY AND ADDRESSING AGEISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

WHEREAS, the mission of Marin County Health and Human Services (HHS) is to uplift and protect the health, well-being, safety, and self-sufficiency of all its residents, and the vision of the County's Area Agency on Aging (AAA) underscores that inclusion and equity are at the heart of its mission; and

WHEREAS, the 2023-2024 Grand Jury has recommended in its report, *Older Adults on the Brink of Homelessness: Time to Act is Now*, that the Marin County Board of Supervisors (BOS) establish a mandate for aging equity, mirroring the existing mandate for racial equity, to meet the unique needs and circumstances of older adults; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Jury has identified that the absence of a mandate for aging equity impedes the prioritization of essential programs and services for older adults, particularly those at risk of homelessness, and has highlighted the urgent need for a strategic plan to prevent homelessness, ensure effective agency coordination, and enhance public education on available resources; and

"WHEREAS, the Office of the Marin County Executive plays a vital role in advancing the County's equity priorities, overseeing countywide initiatives, and is essential to the successful execution of this resolution, providing leadership in bringing it before the Board of Supervisors and collaborating with departments, commissions, and community-based organizations to ensure its adoption and lasting impact; and

WHEREAS, as a county, we strive to raise awareness and address inequities around race, gender, and disability, yet National Ageism Awareness Day on October 9 reminds us that we are only beginning to grasp the inequities surrounding age; and

WHEREAS, ageism—encompassing stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination based on age—operates like other forms of bias, dictating the value and capabilities of individuals and denying fair treatment and equal opportunity to fully participate in society; and

WHEREAS, ageism intersects with other forms of discrimination, including racism, sexism, and ableism, compounding disadvantages and worsening the effects on individuals’ health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, Marin County has one of the highest costs of living in California, contributing to a growing homelessness crisis among older adults, with the Grand Jury noting that current programs are proving insufficient for effective prevention and intervention; and

WHEREAS, studies by the World Health Organization reveal that ageism is one of the most prevalent forms of discrimination; and, locally, data from the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services shows that older adults in Marin face significant challenges due to ageism, particularly in housing, employment, and healthcare, where disparities persist and impact their well-being and access to essential services; and

WHEREAS, unlike other biases that target specific groups, ageism touches us all impacting our health, well-being, and financial stability, while leading to barriers in employment, transportation, and healthcare, and contributing to a public health crisis of isolation and loneliness; and

WHEREAS, fostering a culture of respect for elders is essential in shaping societal attitudes that honor their contributions and dignity; and

WHEREAS, language plays a powerful role in dismantling ageist perceptions and referring to individuals as “older adults” rather than using ageist descriptors can shift our cultural narrative, promoting dignity and respect for all ages; and

WHEREAS, promoting comprehensive treatment and support for older adults means addressing immediate needs while cultivating an environment where they are valued and respected within the community; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Marin County Board of Supervisors:

Adopt a Mandate for Aging Equity: Establish a formal mandate for aging equity, akin to existing mandates for racial equity, to confront the systemic and intersecting impacts of ageism on older adults.

Develop an Aging Equity Strategic Plan: Create a strategic plan that prioritizes the prevention of homelessness among older adults, ensuring effective coordination among agencies and enriching public education on available resources.

Enhance Support Services: Expand and customize support services to meet the specific needs of older adults, recognizing the compounded effects of intersecting forms of discrimination on their health and well-being.

Foster Respectful Attitudes: Promote initiatives that nurture a culture of respect for elders, ensuring societal attitudes recognize and celebrate the contributions of older adults.

Address Intersectionality in Programs: Ensure programs and services acknowledge and address the intersecting impacts of ageism with racism, sexism, and ableism, integrating these considerations into policy development and implementation.

Increase Public Awareness: Launch public awareness campaigns to illuminate the effects of ageism and its intersections with other forms of discrimination, aiming to transform cultural attitudes and reduce stigma.

Improve Access to Healthcare: Advocate for enhanced access to healthcare services for older adults, addressing the unique challenges ageism presents within medical settings.

Support Economic Opportunities: Strengthen support for older adults in the workforce, housing, and transportation, combating age discrimination while promoting economic opportunities that harness their invaluable experience and skills.

Strengthen Funding and Resources: Increase funding and resources for programs specifically designed to uplift older adults, especially those affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

Encourage Multigenerational Collaboration: Foster multigenerational collaboration in community initiatives, recognizing the richness of diverse age perspectives in addressing social challenges.

Monitor and Report Progress: Establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on aging equity initiatives, ensuring transparency and accountability in addressing the needs of older adults.

Engage Community Based Organizations and Stakeholders: Actively engage community-based organizations and stakeholders, including older adults themselves, in shaping and implementing aging equity strategies, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met.