



900 16th Street, NW
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Washington, D.C. 20009

May 2, 2022

The Honorable Rachel Zenzinger
Colorado Senate
200 E Colfax
RM 346
Denver, CO 80203

The Honorable Colin Larson
Colorado House of Representatives
200 E Colfax
RM 307
Denver, CO 80203

The Honorable Barbara Kirkmeyer
Colorado Senate
200 E Colfax
RM 346
Denver, CO 80203

The Honorable Alex Valdez
Colorado House of Representatives
200 E. Colfax
RM 307
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Senator Zenzinger, Senator Kirkmeyer, Representative Larson, and Representative Valdez,

Thank you for your leadership to improve the lives of individuals participating in Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver programs. The Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness' mission is to increase public awareness, promote research, and advocate for policies like House Bill 22-1114 that combat the adverse consequences of social isolation and loneliness and advance approaches that improve social connectedness. We are pleased to support this legislation to provide additional cost-effective and flexible transportation options for Colorado's HCBS program participants.

The Coalition brings together a diverse set of national organizations including, but not limited to, consumer groups, community-based organizations, technology innovators, health and mental health care providers, patient advocates, public health organizations, and health insurers to develop and advocate for federal policy solutions that address the crisis of social isolation and loneliness in the United States. With a comprehensive policy agenda that focuses on public awareness, social and health services, technology, public health and research, the Coalition works to combat the adverse health and economic effects of social isolation and loneliness and advance social connectedness for all Americans.

Notably, studies indicate that anywhere from 25 to 45 percent of the total U.S. population was socially isolated or lonely, or both, prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE).¹ Research conducted at Brigham Young University shows that social isolation and loneliness are associated with a 29 percent and 26 percent increased risk of mortality, respectively, comparable to that of obesity and smoking 15

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. Loneliness and Social Isolation in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. An International Survey (2018). <http://files.kff.org/attachment/Report-Loneliness-and-Social-Isolation-in-the-United-States-the-United-Kingdom-and-Japan-An-International-Survey>; See also National Academies of Sciences, Medicine, and Engineering. The Health and Medical Dimensions of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults (2020). <https://www.nap.edu/resource/25663/Social%20Isolation%20and%20Loneliness%20Report%20Highlights.pdf>; CIGNA. "U.S. Loneliness Index: Survey of 20,000 American Surveying Behaviors Driving Loneliness in the United States." (2018). <https://www.cigna.com/assets/docs/newsroom/loneliness-survey-2018-full-report.pdf>

cigarettes per day.² In addition to the negative health effects, it is estimated that Medicare spends \$6.7 billion every year as a result of the individuals being social isolated.³

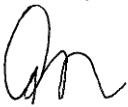
Non-medical transportation is an important component of HCBS that allows waiver participants to remain in their homes and communities and access community services critical to improving quality of life and eliminating social isolation. Current transportation options may require advance scheduling and inflexible pick-up/drop off times. Expanding flexible transportation options helps ensure participants can access waiver and other community services, activities, and resources.

Transportation is a crucial element of HCBS and reducing transportation burdens strengthens the program, facilitates care, reduces social isolation, and allows more individuals to remain in their own homes and communities. We are pleased to support House Bill 22-1114 to that end.

Please do not hesitate to reach out any time to Daneen Sekoni, the Coalition's Senior Policy Director, at dsekoni@healthsperien.com.

Thank you for your work on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Am', written in a cursive style.

Andrew MacPherson
Founder & Chairman
Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness

² J. Holt-Lunstad et al., *Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review*, 10 *Perspect Psychol Sci* 227 (2015).

³ AARP Public Policy Institute. *Medicare Spends More on Socially Isolated Older Adults* (2017).