

JUSTICE IN AGING

FIGHTING SENIOR POVERTY THROUGH LAW

September 29, 2017

Submitted electronically to <https://www.healthypeople.gov/>

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Department of Health and Human Services
1101 Wootton Parkway, LL-100
Rockville, MD 20852

Re: Public Comment for Healthy People 2030 Proposed Framework

Justice in Aging appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed Healthy People 2030 framework.

Justice in Aging is an advocacy organization with the mission of improving the lives of low income older adults. We use the power of law to fight senior poverty by securing access to affordable health care, economic security and the courts for older adults with limited resources. We have decades of experience with Medicare and Medicaid, with a focus on the needs of low-income beneficiaries, including those dually eligible for both programs.

General Comment

Justice in Aging supports the proposed framework and believes it encompasses principles and goals necessary to improve the health and well-being of all older adults, including those with limited income and resources and those who experience greater health disparities.

We are especially encouraged to see eliminating health disparities and achieving health equity among the framework's foundational principles and overarching goals. Stark health disparities exist across race, gender, sexual orientation, and poverty lines, and older adults are no exception. For example, a larger share of Black and Hispanic Medicare beneficiaries report fair or poor health status than white beneficiaries.¹ Similarly, Black and Hispanic adults age 65 and older are almost twice as likely as white older adults to develop diabetes.² Such disparities not only mean poorer health among affected populations, they also lead to higher health care spending.

Specific Comment on Overarching Goals

We also appreciate the framework's recognition that "healthy physical, social and economic environments strengthen the potential to achieve health and well-being." While fewer people

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation, *Profile of Medicare Beneficiaries by Race and Ethnicity*, (March 9, 2016), available at <http://kff.org/medicare/report/profile-of-medicare-beneficiaries-by-race-and-ethnicity-a-chartpack/>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *The State of Aging and Health in America*, (2013) at Figure 2, available at www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/state-aging-health-in-america-2013.pdf.

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in most demographic groups were living in poverty in 2016, the number of seniors living in poverty grew from 6.5 million in 2015 to 7.15 million in 2016.³ This number is expected to continue growing as the over age 65 population reaches almost 73 million by 2030.⁴ Poverty is also higher among older women, people of color, and LGBTQ persons.⁵ Even more, nearly half of our nation’s seniors are economically vulnerable, living under 200% of the federal poverty level; and this rate is much higher among older adults who are in fair or poor health.⁶ These older adults already spend a significant portion of their incomes on health care and face the unfortunate likelihood that they will not be able to keep up with rising health care costs. Healthy economic environments are critical to ensuring that vulnerable older adults can access health care, as well as critical to reversing the trend of rising poverty among seniors. Given the importance of this guiding principle, we recommend incorporating healthy economic environments in the “Overarching Goals” section as well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit comments. If any questions arise concerning this submission, please contact me at jgoldberg@justiceinaging.org.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Goldberg
Directing Attorney

³ See U.S. Census Bureau, *The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2016*, (Sept. 2017), available at www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/p60-261.pdf.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *An Aging Nation: The Older Population in the United States*, (May 2014), available at www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p25-1140.pdf.

⁵ U.S. Administration on Aging, *A Profile of Older Americans: 2015*, (2015), available at www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/Aging%20and%20Disability%20in%20America/2015-Profile.pdf; The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, *No Golden Years at the End of the Rainbow: How a Lifetime of Discrimination Compounds Economic and Health Disparities for LGBT Older Adults*, (August 2013) available at www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/no_golden_years.pdf.

⁶ See Kaiser Family Foundation, *Poverty Among Seniors: An Updated Analysis of National And State Level Poverty Rates Under the Official and Supplemental Poverty Measures*, (June 2015), available at <http://files.kff.org/attachment/issue-briefpoverty-among-seniors-an-updated-analysis-of-national-and-statelevel-poverty-rates-under-the-official-and-supplemental-povertymeasures>.