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The benefits of NORCs are many, including being a cost-effective way to keep older adults to stay safe and healthy in their homes for longer. As a NORC's primary goal is to provide older adults with social services and access to health and wellness programs, including nursing, more funding would allow us to reach more people and provide more care. Many of our participants are homebound or otherwise unable to physically go to a senior center to receive services. Because of the NORC's proximity to residences, we can provide older people with more regular, frequent, and comprehensive access to the services they need. NORCs are better equipped to provide frequent and regular home visits and work with more complicated cases, such as helping residents with dementia. As well, our multilingual staff can support residents in their home languages, making them feel more comfortable asking for and receiving care.

Thus, with more funding, participants could receive more nursing services and home care hours, which is necessary to keep many of our neighbors physically and mentally healthy. We need the capacity to appropriately compensate nursing professionals, hire more nurses, and offer more nursing hours to fulfill the needs we see across the community. The \$1 million restoration is a minimum to ensure providers like University Settlement can provide the quality nursing hours that our neighbors need.

At Village View, we embed mental health services for our older adults. As mental health impacts physical health and particularly as the pandemic increased isolation among older people, we believe that NORCs should be funded if they are able to offer mental health services.

Finally, we support additional funding to increase the number of NORCs as we know how effective the program is in keeping our elders safe and healthy.

Funding Home Delivered Meals (HDM)

We ask the State to provide additional funding of \$14.1 million to the home delivered meals program.

Like many other providers, we have seen more older adults in need of HDM since the pandemic. On the ground, we continue to hear about growing wait lists for meal delivery, indicating the need is still high. Currently, the reimbursement per meal is insufficient to cover the actual costs of the meal and the wages for staff. Additionally, many of our participants need more than one meal a day, and more funding would help meet this need.

Beyond meal delivery, here are also additional health and safety benefits to the HDM program, in large part because of the tireless work and dedication of our delivery drivers. When a regular delivery driver drops off meals, they are also checking in on our older adults to ensure they are both mentally and physically healthy and safe. Many times, our delivery drivers are the ones who report a pressing issue facing our participants; for example, our deliverers have helped participants in the middle of a mental health crisis or reported physical injuries seen on participants. Our older adults feel more comfortable if they see a regular delivery driver rather than different people every day. Increased funding to the HDM program should also allow providers to pay fair wages to their delivery drivers,



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which would stabilize the driver workforce and benefit the older adults receiving meals.

Thank you for your time. We would be happy to answer any questions at awong@universitysettlement.org.