



TESTIMONY
PUBLIC HEARING ON
B22-176, The Health Care Revolving Fund Act of 2017
May 19, 2017

Presented to
Councilmember Vincent. Gray
Chair, Committee on Health
Council of the District of Columbia

Presented by
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Member
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Honorable Councilmember Vincent C. Gray and Members of the Committee on Health:

I am appreciative of the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding B22-176, the “Health Care Revolving Fund Act of 2017” on behalf of the Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Inc. (SHIRE). SHIRE understands that this bill is intended to improve access to capital financing in order to expand and improve capacity to provide health care for the underserved in the District. In light of our organization’s 20-year commitment to close health gaps and support people of color and others to attain optimal health, we fully endorse the purpose of this bill. As a member of the Ward 7 Health Alliance, we are excited by the prospect that this Revolving Fund could help persons who live East of the River gain access to the health care services they need and deserve.

SHIRE shares your vision of a high quality, well-financed comprehensive health care system that is available to all DC residents. We enthusiastically support the establishment of a system that integrates all components necessary to support the health and well-being of the people we serve.

We note with concern, however, that there is no mention in B22-176 of the important role of community organizations as partners with health providers in promoting health and wellness, health literacy and informed consumer participation in the health care system. We therefore recommend consideration of incentives and other strategies that will encourage recipients of loans from the Revolving Fund to engage community partners who can reach and involve D.C. residents. These community entities could provide a range of services to prepare health care consumers to prevent or manage more effectively chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. We also recommend that the Council of the District of Columbia increase substantially financial

investments in health and wellness promotion, giving priority to programs that are conducted in partnership with health service providers.

SHIRE's experience confirms the value of this integrated approach. Since 2014, we have partnered with AmeriHealth Caritas District of Columbia (ACDC), a managed care organization serving an estimated 100,000 Medicaid beneficiaries. In collaboration with two community partners we have informed 2,000 ACDC members in wards 5, 7 and 8 about the benefits of Wellness Circles and over 600 have participated - 50% on a sustained basis. The Wellness Circles program is multi-faceted and comprises a series of six to eight sessions over a three-month period. Wellness Circles provide a variety of educational, hands-on, and group support experiences to help participants "take charge of their health."

Documentation provided by AmeriHealth Caritas District of Columbia (see attached) confirms the positive impact and results of Wellness Circles. Their uniqueness lies in the close working relationship between SHIRE as a community-based organization and ACDC as a health provider that affords opportunities for participants to take action using the information they receive. For example, having learned in Wellness Circles about the importance of nutrition in managing diabetes, they can access ACDC's nutritionists and cooking classes for more instruction. Having experienced new ways to exercise in Wellness Circles, they are motivated to sign up for aquatic exercise or Zumba classes offered by ACDC.

As indicated in the attached report, this integration has yielded results that underscore the need for and value of expansion of Wellness Circles and similar programs into other areas of the District. This model which integrates health/wellness promotion, disease prevention and consumer empowerment strategies with the provision of medical and other health-related services holds great promise for reversing the

high mortality and morbidity rates in East of the River and other DC wards. SHIRE believes that B22-176, "Health Care Revolving Fund Act of 2017" offers an

important opportunity to incentivize, leverage and promote prevention/provider partnerships. We urge that this bill be modified to facilitate such collaboration. SHIRE welcomes an opportunity to share with members of the Council of the District of Columbia more detailed information about Wellness Circles and their implementation. We can be contacted at 202-371-0277, extension 1317 or at rperot@shireinc.org.

Metabolic Syndrome Wellness Circles

Interactive workshop series designed to help members better manage their diabetes and/or hypertensive conditions

Keith Maccannon

April 2017

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AmeriHealth Caritas[™]
District of Columbia

- AmeriHealth Caritas has collaborated with a Community Organization called the Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Inc. (SHIRE) to implement a Metabolic Syndrome Wellness Circles Program for AmeriHealth Caritas members with diabetes and/or hypertension.
- The Wellness Circles consists of six to eight interactive workshops conducted over a 3 month period led by community health and wellness experts from SHIRE with over 60 years combined experience combating obesity and other chronic health conditions in the community.
- Subject matter experts also make presentations on how to prevent hypertension, diabetes and other chronic diseases, as well as ways to manage these conditions over time. Pre and post readings of each participant's body mass index (BMI), blood pressure, HbA1C, and weight are also recorded to measure the immediate impact of the program on each participant.
- In each of the cohorts conducted since the inaugural session in the Spring of 2014, participants exhibited positive results in a several



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areas – increased awareness of the beneficial impact of healthy living; increased physical activity and improved diet; greater compliance with physicians' orders and prescriptions; improved BMI; reduced weight; lower blood pressure readings; and improved HbA1C levels in most cases where applicable.

- The program began with an inaugural cohort (set of workshops) facilitated by the Summit Health Institute for Research and Education (SHIRE) in the Spring of 2014.
- The Spring 2014 cohort went so well that we decided to work with SHIRE to make improvements to the program so that it could be institutionalized with pre- and postprogram metrics to gauge overall effectiveness and impact on member's key biometrics.
- The program has continued to grow and improve since 2014, incorporating lessons learned and other improvements on each subsequent cohort and set of workshops.

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- SHIRE facilitated all of the cohorts between Spring 2014 and Spring 2016.
 - Cohort #1 – SHIRE – Spring of 2014 – Allen Chapel AME Church
 - Cohort #2 – SHIRE – Spring of 2015 – Allen Chapel AME Church
 - Cohort #3 – SHIRE – Fall of 2015 – Allen Chapel AME Church ○
 - Cohort #4 – SHIRE – Spring of 2016 – Allen Chapel AME Church

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- Beginning in the Spring of 2016, AmeriHealth Caritas DC worked with the SHIRE leadership team to identify (1-2) community organizations that could be trained and mentored to conduct parallel cohorts of Metabolic Syndrome Wellness Circles.
- Lyndia Grant from Lynda Grant and Associates (LGA) and Victorianne Walton from It's in the Genes (IITG) were identified as community leaders with the experience, technical expertise and passion to move the program forward.
- After closely observing the SHIRE Wellness Circles conducted in the Spring of 2016 and receiving training and mentorship from SHIRE, LGA and IITG partnered to facilitate a new set of Wellness Circles in Ward 5 beginning in the Fall of 2016. This new Ward 5 Wellness Circle program was hosted at All Nations Baptist Church.
- And in parallel with this new Ward 5 Wellness Circles (Cohort 5.1), SHIRE began anew with its latest set of Wellness Circles.
- The Ward 5 Wellness Circles ultimately proved successful, exhibiting significant biometric improvement consistent with the results that had emerged from the SHIRE Wellness Circles.
- AmeriHealth then began developing a game plan in collaboration with SHIRE, LGA and IITG for how the Wellness Circles concept could be expanded to a larger group of member participants.
- Building on the experience and confidence gained by successfully facilitating the Ward 5 Wellness Circles, LGA and IITG were ready to branch out to conduct their own individual Wellness Circle programs.
- Accordingly, for the Spring of 2017, Lyndia Grant of LGA leveraged her experience and lessons learned from partnership with IITG in the Fall of 2016 and assumed sole leadership of the Ward 5 Wellness Circles at All Nations Baptist Church.

- Similarly, Victorianne Walton of IITG married the experience and knowledge she gained from the Wellness Circles in Ward 8 and the Ward 5 partnership with LGA together with her own expertise and special brand of health advocacy to develop a new set of Wellness Circles in Ward 7- now partnering with the very willing and enthusiastic Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church.
- The LGA Wellness Circles began on March 23, 2017 at All Nations Baptist Church and the IITG Ward 7 Wellness Circles will begin on Thursday, April 27 at the Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church.
- And consistent with our goal to further scale up the program, SHIRE signed on with AmeriHealth to expand in Ward 8, contracting to offer (2) cohorts in the Spring of 2017.
- As such, SHIRE has a cohort up and running at Allen Chapel AME Church that began on March 28 and a new cohort up and running at Temple of Praise that began on Tuesday, April 18, 2017.
- All of the AmeriHealth Caritas DC participants in the Wellness Circles have been diagnosed with diabetes, hypertension or both diabetes and hypertension.
- Individuals suffering with diabetes and/or hypertension who do not have their chronic condition under control have a significantly higher probability to visit the ER at some point for their condition, and they also have a higher probability to have a potentially preventable admission. Because of this, we consider the Metabolic Syndrome Wellness Circles a key intervention that will contribute to decreasing the number occurrence of potentially preventable admissions.
- Based on internal analysis using member claims data, the plan found that the average annual medical cost for each individual diagnosed with uncontrolled diabetes far exceeds the cost per individual enrolled in the Wellness Circle programs.
- Thus far the number of participants attending each workshop ranged between 30-50 participants, with the most recent cohorts having an average of 20 participants who had completed all (5) pre and post screenings – which means these participants came to the first or second AmeriHealth Caritas District workshop where prescreenings are taken and then again to the last workshop where post-screenings are conducted.

- As mentioned previously, since the inaugural session in the Spring of 2014, participants exhibited positive results in a several areas – increased awareness of the beneficial impact of healthy living; increased physical activity and improved diet; greater compliance with physicians’ orders and prescriptions; improved BMI; reduced weight; lower blood pressure readings; and improved HbA1C levels in most cases where applicable.