

WENDY PETERSON'S OPENING REMARKS

Good Morning. My name is Wendy Peterson and I'm the Director of the Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County. On behalf of our Coalition members and Steering Committee, I'd like to welcome you all here today.

I would first like to thank our partner Alameda County Social Services Agency, and our sponsors, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, Kaiser Permanente, and Alameda Alliance for Health. Without them this convening would not have been possible. Thank you to our volunteers, and to my awesome staff.

I'm so glad that we have so many partners from the community here with us today, people from the Villages, from United Seniors and from the Pool of Consumer Champions. I know that they will help us remind ourselves that their experience is what counts when we talk about improving health and life outcomes for older people.

Before we dive into the program I'd like to give you a little context.

This is the fourth year for this conference. Each year we've used the convening to bring our silos together to talk about how we can make a difference in the lives of seniors in Alameda County.

Last year we convened just after the election and I remember saying to you all "we're still here, we're not going away, and we have a lot of work to do." Well, so much positive work has been done! We wanted to start by showing you a video of all the innovations and change efforts that are happening in the county to move the dial on improving health and life outcomes for older people... but the list quickly grew to volumes and we knew we couldn't possibly capture it all. So we decided to capture a few. There is so much more that we couldn't fit into 5 minutes. And we couldn't capture it all on the single page in your program. And we didn't even try to cover the groundswell of advocacy efforts that are fighting back to protect the programs that seniors rely on. If you know about a community effort or systems change initiative that is underway in Alameda County, please share it on the community wall today!

The take-away: Change is happening; **we** are **making** it happen, all of us together. But how do we take it to the next level, where it is more than an assortment of innovative pilots – and more than coordinated silos – where it has deeper, lasting impact? How do we overcome institutional and social structures that keep us in our silos, and that disempower and isolate people? How do we reshape our public systems and our communities to be relevant for older people no matter what age we are?

Today we'll be asking these questions. And I hope that you all take it very personally. We are becoming an older society. We need to be thinking about that as we work together to develop a community, not silos, not individual programs, a community.

The strength of that community, our connectiveness will determine the extent to which we can weather the forces of political and policy change, and shape a local aging ecosystem that works for all of us.