



FROM THE CEO, DREW DYSON

“What’s Next?”

Dear Friends,

My favorite television program of all time is Aaron Sorkin’s *The West Wing*, which featured an up close, behind-the-scenes look at the fictional White House of President Jeb Bartlett. With a delightful cast of characters, including my favorites CJ Cregg and Toby Ziegler, and fast-paced, witty dialogue, *The West Wing* quickly became an Emmy-winning sensation. In nearly every episode of the seven-year series, President Bartlett would turn to his staff following tense moments and huge decisions, and calmly say, “What’s next?”

Nearly two years into the Covid-19 pandemic, we are faced as a community of older adults with the same question: What’s next? What emerging issues or trends will significantly impact the lives of older adults – and set the course for agencies, such as PSRC, who deliver services and programs to help older adults thrive?

Over the last several months, I have listened to over twenty experts on aging, in fields ranging from health care to retirement planning to intergenerational relationships, offer their perspectives on the future of aging. The Milken Institute Center for the Future of Aging, led by chairman Paul Irving, summarized four key insights for the future of aging that emerged in these conversations.

- 1) **Advancing Research on Aging.** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the disproportionate harm inflicted upon older adults during this public health crisis and underscored the need for developing a deeper understanding of the underlying biological and social mechanisms of aging to develop more effective intervention strategies.
- 2) **Adopting New Technologies.** The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly accelerated the shift toward a technology-enabled future, reshaping trends and preferences along the way. For many older adults, our daily lives have been profoundly impacted by this remote-first approach to caring for many of life’s necessities. Irving writes, “Technology and digital solutions were identified by our experts as powerful tools to increase health care quality and access, social connectivity, and supports that can enable older adults to age in place.” This profound shift, however, further exacerbates the divide between those with access and those without, calling forth creative solutions rooted in equity and justice.
- 3) **Tackling Ageism.** The pandemic has unfortunately called attention to the blight of age bias in our culture and our society. At a time when society could have united to protect those who were most at risk, visible ageism surfaced in everything from policy failures to respond effectively to the nursing home crisis, calls by political leaders to segregate people by age and “assume the risk” that comes with aging, and even popular culture memes such as “Okay Boomer.” “To realize a future where older adults are valued, empowered to shape their work and social lives, and meaningfully engaged in their communities,” Irving writes, “our experts urge that we tackle ageism now, whenever and wherever it is encountered.”
- 4) **Promoting Intergenerational Connection.** Multigenerational approaches to planning and policy making can be a potent force in building bridges, not walls, between the generations. Experts called for the creation

and fostering of intergenerational workforces and initiatives, community spaces, and living arrangements to enhance understanding and collaboration while increasing empathy and connection to solve vexing social challenges.

These four themes dovetail with where we are headed as an organization. We will continue to offer dynamic lifelong learning, compassionate social services, and professional resource referral while expanding our use of virtual and hybrid platforms. We will continue to offer technology assistance to help our participants navigate this expanding technological world. We will advocate and work with others on bridging the technology gap and advancing tech equity. We will offer robust in-person, virtual, and hybrid programming that

meets people where they are – and offers service to the greatest number of people possible. We will expand our work in combatting ageism through education, advocacy, and intergenerational programming.

This is an ambitious agenda, but I believe PSRC will be up to the task. The opening of the Nancy S. Klath Center for Lifelong Learning gives us expanded capacity to meet the needs of those we serve. I look forward to journeying with you as we discover together “what’s next!”

All the Best,
Drew A. Dyson, PhD
Chief Executive Officer