

**LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE NOW:
ENJOYING YOUR GOLDEN YEARS WITH
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL VITALITY**

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

U.S. SENATE,
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m., Waring Senior Center, Charleston, South Carolina, Hon. Tim Scott, Ranking Member, presiding.

Present: Senator Tim Scott

**OPENING STATEMENT OF TIM SCOTT,
RANKING MEMBER**

Senator TIM SCOTT. Good morning everyone, and thank you for joining us for this Special Committee on Aging hearing as we discuss in our first field hearing some of the important issues around really living your best life now. It's an exciting topic, and I look forward to hearing from some of our really incredible guests that we have with us today. Thank you all for being here. I look forward to your comments, and I'm encouraged by the thoughts and the words that you've already spoken earlier today and look forward to having you address the public today.

Good morning to everyone, and I want to welcome everyone who's joining us virtually. We decided because of COVID, with the higher level of activity, that perhaps the most important thing we could do to have a special hearing on aging is not to bring a bunch of folks into the room; and so I think that was the first decision made by my excellent staff. It was a good decision, and I certainly support it; and now I look forward to having an opportunity for us to discuss some of the really important issues that face South Carolina and, frankly, our nation as it relates to issues around aging.

Focusing on living your best life now is something that, when I think about that topic, the first person that comes to my mind is my mother, Frances Scott, who has for the last 45 years served in the capacity of the Roper St. Francis Bon Secours Healthcare System as a nurse's assistant; so she is someone who has really helped so many folks, over her four-plus decades, age gracefully. This is someone, of course my personal American hero, my mom, Frances Scott, but she has spent so much time teaching me valuable lessons about taking care of others when they can't take care of themselves. Something that's really embedded in our culture here in South Carolina is the fact that we do want to go the extra mile for

those folks who have served us personally, individually, or corporately. As a State, we want to take care of those folks in our State who have done such a great job of helping others. The good news is we have innovation as a major part of who we are as South Carolinians, and that doesn't just mean from a healthcare perspective, sometimes it's financial security, dignity when it comes to aging; the importance of aging gracefully requires all of us to help each of us.

South Carolina has had tremendous growth; since 2010, 11 percent growth in our State. More than 5 million people, smart Americans, now call South Carolina their home. Interestingly enough, at the same time those South Carolinians over the age of 65, it's almost 1 out of 5, 18 percent of South Carolinians are over the age of 65. That's good news because we're living longer and people are making the decision to call South Carolina their home. From that distinction, the 18 percent of South Carolinians over the age of 65, South Carolina ranks among the top 10 with the highest percentage of people over the age of 65 in our country. Seniors from all across the nation are flocking to South Carolina. Maybe it's because of the history of our State and the fact that we focus so much on preservation; might be the beaches here down in the Lowcountry; the mountains in the Upstate; or it could be because of folks in Greenville and Spartanburg, according to the US News and World Report, some of the best places to live in all of America, right here in the Palmetto State.

However, while we have much to celebrate as a State, we also have some challenges that we face as a State, and frankly as a Nation. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in South Carolina. Two out of five South Carolinians have high blood pressure. South Carolina also ranks 6th and 12th as it relates to adults with diabetes and obesity. Unfortunately, because of those challenges, our State is a part of the stroke belt.

There's good news. South Carolina is emerging in the life sciences. Led by the Department of Commerce and other regional economic development partners, we have recruited over 800 companies with over 43,000 life science professionals whose economic impact on the state is over \$12 billion; but more importantly, it focuses our attention as a State on the importance of developing and evolving healthcare expertise so that our seniors have the opportunity to live life and to live it at their best right now. I'm very thankful to live in a State where we focus on outcomes.

You know, many people have said that music and the arts are like the universal language, feeding the human spirit in the best of times and, frankly, even in the worst of times. One great example is the University of South Carolina's Congaree New Horizons Band, a band for people 50 and older. Yes, that means me too. Sara Coffman, a band member, emphasized the joy of being able to work with and see one another each week to make music together. Craig Plank agrees and adds that rehearsals are one of the ways to keep the mind sharp.

I love the fact that we are engaging in really important initiatives and activities that allow the human spirit to continue to flourish in the best of years. Frankly, as I said earlier, the latter reign, according to those of us who follow scripture, should be better than

the former reign. I believe that the best is yet to come for our seniors and think that it's a powerful opportunity for us to focus on that today.

I am grateful for the assistance of Senator Mark Kelly from Arizona. He has joined me in introducing for the first time a resolution making September National Healthy Aging Month. It recognizes senior centers for their central services and activities that forge relationships, purpose, and well-being. Today nearly 11,000 senior centers serve more than 1 million seniors.

I also want to thank at this time the Waring Senior Center and Roper St. Francis Healthcare System for being such great hosts today. Your center is a home away from home for so many seniors, and they're able to engage in music, in the arts, pickleball, book clubs, and even drum ball.

Now, before we're done, Dr. Ciccone, I want to know what drum ball is.

You need to know what it is too. Okay. We'll defer that for one of the questions 15 for the record.

I will say that we sit in a place named for a former city council member, Louis Waring, who passed away just a couple of years ago. I will say, I knew Louis Waring. He was a prince of a fellow. He was the iron fist in a beautiful glove, literally. He was the kind of person who set the example. He spoke with wisdom and with grace. He was a powerful presence but always gracious. His son Keith is now a member of the Charleston City Council, as he was previously before he passed away; and so it's fitting to be in a place where someone with such wisdom and grace led his community in a powerful way. Now we have an opportunity to use this amazing facility to talk about graceful living.

I want to get quickly to the introductions of our guests today, our witnesses. First of all I'll start with Connie Munn, the Director of South Carolina Department on Aging. Director Munn was confirmed last year by Governor McMaster as the first director of our Department on Aging for South Carolina. Director Munn has a background as a mental health counselor. She has been involved in aging issues since earning her master's of social work from the University of South Carolina, where she specializes in geriatrics. Ms. Munn, thank you so much for being a part of this discussion today, and we certainly look forward to your comments.

Ms. MUNN. Thank you.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Dr. Ciccone. It is my pleasure to introduce a cardiologist and associate chief medical officer at Roper St. Francis Mount Pleasant Hospital. He is also the medical director of the Healthy Lifestyle Program, the region's only hospital based program designed to reduce cardiovascular risk and improve overall well-being. It serves more than 300 participants a year, and over 70 percent of the participants are over age 55. As I discussed a little earlier, people are flocking to the State. Dr. Ciccone beat the masses, and you got here in 2012 I think it was.

Dr. CICCONE. It was.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Well, thank you for becoming a South Carolinian, and thank you for bringing your expertise to the discussion that we're having today.

Dr. CICCONE. Thank you.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Kesha Hayes, our next witness I want to introduce, is founder of Caring for Aging Beauties. I love that. I love that. Kesha is also the CEO and owner of Professional Development and Training Services, which trains caregivers to provide care for older Americans. Kesha founded Senior Service Day, an event which received a Governor's proclamation showing seniors how to live in an excited fashion, understand companionship, and social engagement. Kesha, I'm thrilled to have you with us today, and thank you so much for being a part of our discussion today.

Now, the elegant Connie Ross-Karl is the one there with the sash on. Connie, Ms. Ross-Karl, got her start in pageants when she represented South Carolina in the Ms. Senior America Pageant in 2007. Today she coaches pageant contestants in many age groups and is a certified Miss America Judge. Ms. Ross-Karl described seniors as the backbone of our country. I could not agree more. She said, "Ms. Senior America becomes a platform for women to assist other women and the senior population in general. When you put a crown and a sash on someone who's 60 years or older, it literally changes their life and makes them the best they can be." Thank you for sharing your expertise and your passion today with all of us.

Ms. ROSS-KARL. Thank you.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Floyd Spence, Jr., owner and instructor of Lake Murray Fitness Cycle, thank you for joining us today to talk about the importance of fitness and vitality as a part of this discussion today. Very important. David has been a sports and fitness enthusiast his entire life. He played football—I didn't know that—at the University of South Carolina. Go Gamecocks. I would say that the victory this weekend was not too bad of a start. What, 46 points?

Mr. SPENCE. Forty-six.

Senator TIM SCOTT. May we see more of that all year long.

Mr. SPENCE. Thank you, sir.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Yes, absolutely. I'm a little biased, I apologize, toward the Gamecocks.

Now David leads fitness classes at gyms across the Midlands and is continuously searching for ways to help others train properly and remain active at any age. David is the eldest son of the late Congressman Floyd Spence who represented South Carolina's Second congressional District in Washington for more than 30 years. David shared that his father set an amazing example for him to not only remain active throughout his life but also to devote his life to serving and helping others. David, I'm thrilled to have you with us today.

Mr. SPENCE. Thank you, sir.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you for a lifetime of service.

Mr. SPENCE. Thank you, sir. My pleasure.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you. Perry Bowers, our last witness, founder and president of Focused Living Ministries. As a man of family myself, I am certainly thankful that you are part of this panel; and we recognize the important role that faith plays in our lives and, frankly, even in aging gracefully. I think it's a really important part and key ingredient to a life well served, a life well lived I should say. I'm proud to have Perry as a part of our Pal-

metto State and thankful for your ministry and the work that you've done. One of the favorite scriptures that I have is Proverbs 29:18 that says without a vision people perish or cast off restraint. One of the things I love about your presence and your focus is you are helping others find their own vision at times, and that is such an important ingredient into a purpose driven life, which in my opinion is one of the best ways to have your latter days be better than your former days, and that's an important part.

Before we enter into witness testimony, I will say that, as I said before he arrived, this is the building center named for Mr. Louis Waring, and I mentioned that his son Keith Waring was a member of city council. Keith has been kind enough to join us. Keith, will you say hello to everyone.

Mr. WARING. Hello everyone.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you for being here, Keith.

Mr. WARING. Thank you for being here.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Absolutely. Ms. Munn, do you want to start us off?

**STATEMENT OF CONNIE D. MUNN, DIRECTOR,
SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGING,
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA**

Ms. MUNN. Yes, sir. Good morning. I'm Connie Munn, and I serve as the Director of the South Carolina Department on Aging. It is an honor to be with all of you today. Senator Scott, I want to especially thank you for hosting this field hearing highlighting all of the great progress we are making together as a team here in South Carolina with regard to health and vibrant aging.

Throughout the pandemic the strength of the Aging Network in South Carolina has been tested and truly showcased. Regional and community partners all across the State have come together in a time of great need, a true testament to the dedication and devotion to those who have a desire to help others when most in need. While the threat to an older adult's health and well-being has been intensified during the pandemic, longstanding partnerships as well as new connections have been vital to the continuation of services for our most vulnerable population.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic the South Carolina Department on Aging and the Aging Network immediately observed barriers that seniors faced regarding nutrition, and we began to encourage the use of additional nutritional supports to fill the gap, such as providing bags of groceries or assisting with enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as the SNAP benefits.

One such example is when a senior called the Trident Area Agency on Aging because she desperately needed food. She was caring for her husband, who was a disabled veteran and also going through cancer treatments at a VA facility. This particular senior did not drive and had to walk to get her food, so the Area Agency on Aging was able to provide her some food from their pantry and connect her with Lowcountry Street Grocery to provide a weekly delivery of eggs and fresh produce to an area which was deemed a food desert.

This is just one example which illustrates that in order to promote healthy, active, and independent lifestyles, community support and services must be provided from a holistic approach. To live a fruitful life all dimensions must be assessed, and supports should be tailored to the unique needs of the individual. This is why a multitude of evidence based programing is offered in South Carolina to enrich the lives of older adults, to improve their health and well-being, and to reduce disease and injury. The majority of these programs are funded through the Older Americans Act and are directly implemented by our Aging Network by certified and trained individuals. Additionally, programing is provided in collaboration with other State agencies and university systems utilizing alternate funding sources.

Some examples of our evidence-based programs that are provided in South Carolina include Powerful Tools For Caregivers, which is a caregiver support program; falls prevention resources, such as Fit & Strong and Enhance Fitness; and Clemson University has partnered with the Administration for Community Living on a grant to reduce fall risk in rural, older South Carolinians. We know diabetes and arthritis are chronic diseases that affect our older South Carolinians, and so to combat diseases we offer the Diabetes Self-Management Program and an Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program. The Trident Area Agency on Aging offers a unique program which highlights a partnership between community and clinical linkages Roper St. Francis Hospital System for the delivery of the Enhance Fitness Program.

The Department on Aging established a social isolation and loneliness task force which led to developing supports and resources for those older adults most at risk, which were the rural, minority, and homebound individuals. Some of the projects in progress include Senior Kits, which offers take-home kits for adults to enhance emotional, mental, and physical wellness; and an iPad loan program, which is a partnership we have with South Carolina Assistive Technology to offer seniors iPads to take home.

The Department on Aging has been able to form various partnerships with Federal and State agencies as well as non-profits. One of those is the Housing and Urban Development in-home modification grant. Our agency just received a \$1.1 million grant that will encourage vibrant aging and lifestyle by funding minor home repair to seniors in 29 counties throughout South Carolina. By utilizing an in-home occupational therapist and the regional assessors in the Area Agencies on Aging we know that this will be a successful project to keep our older South Carolinians active and improve their quality of life.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that the South Carolina Department on Aging recognizes that wellness is a multidimensional measure of overall health, integrating the mind, the body, and the spirit. Regardless of the social, economic, or environmental conditions, all older adults have the right to health and wellness services. While the Older Americans Act provides many direct programs and services, we feel like the Department on Aging aims to bridge the gap with those entities who do the same or similar work. We believe that this task is best accomplished by coordination, cooperation, and collaboration by partnering with other State agen-

cies, non-profits, health systems, and higher education institutions to provide positive change for South Carolina's older adults.

Senator Scott, I again thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony today, and I look forward to answering any questions or concerns you may have.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you, ma'am. Dr. Ciccone.

**STATEMENT OF JOHN M. CICCONE, MD,
FACC, ABIHM, ASSOCIATE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER,
ROPER ST. FRANCIS HEALTHCARE,
MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA**

Dr. CICCONE. Good morning. Thank you, Senator Scott, and thank you to Roper St. Francis for the opportunity to testify today about such an important problem, aging in our population. I expected to come away from today with learning some new things from my other panelists, but I didn't expect to really understand what drum ball was, but I did Google it, and it's quite interesting.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Excellent.

Dr. CICCONE. The world's population is aging as a consequence of increasing longevity and decreased fertility. It is estimated that in 2015 the percentage of the world's population age 65 and older was 9 percent or 617 million persons. That population is projected to rise to 1 billion persons by 2030 and 1.6 billion by 2050. Growth in the under 20 year old population is anticipated to be flat and moderately increasing over the next 30 years.

Europe is currently the oldest region with 17.4 percent of the population aged 65 and older and anticipated to encompass 25 percent of the population of the world by 2050. North America will retain its position as the second oldest region with projection of 21.4 percent aged 65 and older by 2050. In comparison, the same demographic is projected to triple in size in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the fastest growing aging population. Africa will have a significant rise in the older population but will remain relatively younger due to high fertility rates.

Allow me to address some specific challenges. Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death in the US population, accounting for one third of the deaths in the US every year. The cost is staggering with direct costs of \$214 billion and a further cost of \$138 billion due to lost job productivity. The noneconomic costs further emphasize the magnitude of the problem.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the US, accounting for nearly 600,000 deaths annually. As of 2020 the cost to the healthcare system was approximately \$174 billion.

Diabetes affects more than 34.2 million Americans with another 88 million having prediabetes, the precursor to type 2 diabetes, and is directly linked to diet and obesity. Diabetes leads to chronic heart and cerebrovascular disease, kidney failure, and blindness, which negatively affect quality of life and cause an estimated \$327 billion in direct costs and lost job productivity.

Obesity is an endemic, affecting 19 percent children and 42 percent of adults. Obesity is directly linked to heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers at a cost of \$147 billion annually.

Arthritis affects 1 in 4 adults in the US. It is a leading cause of work disability and a common cause of chronic pain, incurring a

total cost to the healthcare system of \$304 billion as of 2013, \$164 billion in lost earnings alone.

Alzheimer's disease affects 5.7 million Americans and is the sixth leading cause of death in all adults and the fifth leading cause of death in the age 65 or older population. It is estimated that the costs associated with treatment will be between \$379 billion and \$500 billion by 2050.

The anticipated rise in healthcare costs due to the aging population is not sustainable. Appropriate strategies to decrease the incidence of chronic diseases and the associated costs to the healthcare system are critical if we are to sustain appropriate access to our population. Even a decrease in incidence of chronic diseases by 10 percent would result in savings of greater than \$100 billion to the healthcare system. Using primary and secondary prevention strategies relying primarily upon lifestyle changes are extremely cost effective and will improve quality of life for the aging population. Improved education to the at-risk population in particular can further enhance the positive impact of costs upon the healthcare system.

The 21st Century Cures Act mandates that patients have unfettered access to their medical records. Navigating through the maze of lab and imaging reports and physician notes is a daunting task for patients. Providing an organized approach to this information with patient approved secure access to medical records to all providers involved in the care of the patient and using artificial intelligence to improve patient medical literacy will be an adjunct to cost effective management.

Remote patient monitoring of patients with chronic diseases and the development of virtual care paradigms will further enhance the ability of healthcare providers to extend and improve care to the at-risk population, concentrating efforts to the high cost patient using population health.

Healthcare expenditures will continue to rise as the population ages due to environmental factors as well as the development of chronic diseases as part of the aging process. Many of these diseases can be prevented or modified by early intervention using lifestyle measures and appropriate introduction of medications which prevent end organ damage. An appropriate exercise regimen tailored to the patient further enhances the comprehensive approach to the patient.

The Healthy Lifestyle Program at Roper St. Francis is an example of a cardiometabolic program aimed at reducing risk for chronic disease, normalizing metabolic abnormalities, decreasing the need for medications, and improving overall fitness and functionality of the patient. Fine tuning the diet and setting goals for fitness are essential to this approach. Patients meet with a dietician regularly and adjust diet to a more balanced and healthy plan. Regularly scheduled small group exercise sessions with homework assignments on non-gym days improve fitness, overall metabolic abnormalities, and improve functionality, particularly in those patients previously limited by orthopedic issues. The program creates structure and accountability for patients whose greatest barriers historically have been nonadherence to diet and exercise.

I'm sorry about running over time, but thank you for the opportunity again.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF KESHA L. HAYES, MA, LPN, FOUNDER OF
CARING FOR AGING BEAUTIES, LUGOFF, SOUTH CAROLINA**

Ms. HAYES. Good morning everyone, and thank you so much, Senator Scott, for allowing me to be here, and thank you so much to the amazing Special Committee on Aging staff and all that you are doing for our older adults in South Carolina. Aging is inevitable, but it shouldn't be miserable. Some say aging in place, but I tend to say aging in grace. We just never know if the place that someone is aging in happens to be a good space.

All over the world there is an elderly man or woman that fought for us to be in a room. They actually fought for me to be here sitting in this seat, and, yes, I get emotional about that because we are caring for those that once cared for us. Aging beauty, that has nothing to do with gender but everything to do with grace and wisdom. Actually, the definition of an aging beauty is a person with exemplary wisdom who should be valued and celebrated daily. Some of us have lost sight of the honor that an aging beauty should be shown, and we should never do that. When we speak of older adults, we should think of someone that's not dying, not someone helpless, but someone who made sacrifices for us to operate like we are today.

I was wondering why I fell in love with aging beauties, and I remember sitting under an oak tree in front of my grandparents' house, and I would listen to all the wisdom that they would be talking about until it was time for me to leave because it was those conversations that, you know, children couldn't be a part of. I wanted to do something special for older adults, so I began the path of first thinking that I would train healthcare professionals so that they can properly care for those who cared for us; and in doing so we would provide them with a rewarding career so that they can be self-sufficient, get off unemployment, and then provide care to our greatest generation in a proper fashion because aging beauties do deserve to be taken care of properly.

Then that wasn't enough, so I decided that we would show special recognition to aging beauties by creating a day to show social engagement and companionship. A third of seniors are lonely, feel abandoned, they are depressed, and we needed to show them that we care about them; so we created senior service day, a proclaimed day in South Carolina that allows everyone in the State to go and show honor and love by doing special activities, games, or even just dropping things off on someone's porch.

Caring for Aging Beauties, our nonprofit, was then birthed; and now we provide The Care Lab, a place where family members who are caring for loved ones can come and learn technical skills for free, but they also connect with other family members in the same situation and receive peer support. Actually, the students that are trained in our healthcare school, they are the ones that are doing the training of these family caregivers, so they're giving back before they even start the workforce.

The Senior and Caregiver Expo provides a way for all entities to come together and provide the resources for seniors in one place so that they can know exactly what's out there for them, and it provides fun, fellowship, self-care, food, and lots of music. We have birthday clubs, pen pal programs, monthly activities, and we call this the Connecting Generations Program. It's very important that intergenerational programing is necessary and that it's promoted so that we can have a strong sense of community and connect generations.

As one of our participants, Mary Brevard, shared, "Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength." The beauty of a woman is not in a facial mole, but true beauty in a woman is reflected in her soul. It is the caring that she lovingly gives, the passion that she knows. Aging beauty of a woman with passing years only grows. Thank you.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you very much, ma'am.

Ms. Ross-Karl.

**STATEMENT OF CONNIE ROSS-KARL, HONORARY SENIOR
AMERICA, NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA**

Ms. ROSS-KARL. Good morning, Chairman Scott, fellow participants and invited guests. Thank you for the honor of speaking to you today as the Senior America State Administrator for South Carolina and an Honorary Senior American, I am proud to introduce you to a 42-year-old anomaly of a national movement of thousands of women, whose founder, Dr. Al Mott, is still a participant, along with his wife Elizabeth, to share my knowledge and experiences in anecdotes about successful aging and to capture how the enthusiasm for life that being a queen at the age of elegance, 60 or older, dispels some of the misconceptions of aging.

The Senior America Pageant recognizes physical fitness, of course, and seeks to emphasize that fitness comes in many shapes and sizes and that true beauty is a matter of insight as well as eyesight. The pageant emphasizes that if you're interested in staying healthy as you age, you need to highlight both your workout muscles as well as your creative ones. Ongoing research suggests that creativity may be a key to healthy aging. By giving women 60 years of age and older an opportunity to display their inner beauty, talents, and elegance, the pageant honors the achievement of senior women and motivates and encourages them to utilize their full potential to share their positive outlook with others.

Senior America contestants also benefit from important friendships they have developed by competing, friendships that last really to the end of our lives. Through social capital and its bridging affect into different unique worlds seniors can enjoy better physical, mental, and emotional well-being. When grandma's happy, everybody's happy. Helping each other may be as simple as straightening a crown or as complicated as staying up all night putting ice on the face of a queen who has fallen but still has to escort on the red carpet the next day, give out awards, and perform on a television show that's being broadcast for 11 million people. I was the fallen queen. Ida Brinkley, 2010, was my diligent nurse.

Falls, such as breaking a leg or a hip, are our real nemesis and happen sometimes at really important events. One of my sisters

from 2007 fell at the national pageant, broke her hip, and was in recovery for more than 2 years.

Today Fran Owens is president of our national alumni association. We watch out for each other and help each other get through just about anything. Bernadette Dudek lost her husband, the love of her life, more than a decade ago when she was living in New Jersey. The New Jersey Senior America organization embraced her and encouraged her to be a participant. She was a finalist that year in the national pageant in 2009 and competed in the national pageant 10 years later representing South Carolina, as she now lives in Fort Mill. We uplift one another to be the best we can be from inspiring others recovering from injury and illness to things as simple as good vision and dental health. We share our poignant moments, from spending time with Jon Bon Jovi and learning how to mashed potato from Dee Dee Sharp.

I wore my Senior America banner when I climbed the Great Wall of China. I wore it when I walked with my family behind the caisson carrying the remains of my World War II parents who have been laid to rest in Arlington; and was later swarmed by a wonderful group of South Carolina students, all of us visiting the Iwo Jima monument. They saw my banner, and they all wanted pictures.

Finally, the Ms. Senior America Pageant is designed not only to enrich the lives of seniors but to tap their energy to enrich the lives of others. It is dedicated to diversity and spotlighting the positive aspects of aging. The organization encourages queens to have personal platforms and offers a local, State, and national stage for that. One example is Marlisa K. Small's Bold and Beautiful Wigs for Cancer, which gives a free, high-quality wig to men, women, and children in treatment for cancer. Her charity went from a local charity to a national charity in conjunction with her year as Ms. Senior South Carolina in 2018. Raquel Welch learned about Marlisa and giving away Raquel's wigs and donated a stunning personal gown to Marlisa to auction at her fundraising gala. It brought \$10,000.

I would like to close with this thought, pageants are not finite at any age. We are more than queens of the old people. There are many women deserving of recognition, and participants truly do represent a cross-section of America. Ranking Member Scott, thank you for hosting this hearing today, and I look forward to what is to come in the hearing; and on behalf of the age of elegance, we women thank you.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you so much, ma'am.

Mr. Spence.

**STATEMENT OF FLOYD DAVIDSON SPENCE, JR.,
OWNER & INSTRUCTOR OF LAKE MURRAY
FITNESS CYCLE, LLC, LEXINGTON, SOUTH CAROLINA**

Mr. SPENCE. Good morning, Ranking Member Scott, distinguished panel, and guests. I am honored and blessed to share how my life's journey has allowed me the opportunity to positively affect the lives of others through what I call my "Five to Stay Alive" foundation principles: Faith, family, friends, freedom and fitness. They

are values Momma and Daddy held so dearly and shared with me and my three brothers.

Beginning some 68 years ago—okay, do the math—my life was active from the start. My dad, Floyd Spence, and mom, Lu Spence, moved to Lake Murray outside of Lexington, South Carolina, when I was about 3 years old. Dad helped build our home, so learning about physical activity was just a natural part of growing up.

I started playing baseball and football as soon as I was old enough to play Little League, Dixie Youth Baseball, and Youth Football. I was fortunate enough to enjoy some success, and my dad, along with some great coaches, mentors, and friends, gave me some wonderful advice: If you want to excel in sports, you should train well and consistently, don't settle into just one sport, set yourself up for success by not drinking, not smoking, and not doing drugs. To a kid of eight to ten years of age, I believe that advice was gold. For the remainder of my life I have followed it.

God's plan has led me to Nautilus Sports Medical and Fitness, then St. Andrews Fitness, Gold's Gym, MUV Fitness, Lake Murray Fitness Cycle, Dynamic Health and Fitness, and Crunch Fitness, where I was responsible for instructing classes and training people of all ages, needs and interests. My journey is filled with ordinary people who have done extraordinary and miraculous things because they made a commitment to themselves to live life active and well. My active life, my early decisions, and even my injuries and challenges, were all part of the Master's plan, not only for me but for my dad.

My dad developed COPD in his 50's, and by 60 he was living with 5 percent total lung function, on oxygen 24 hours a day, and in a wheelchair much of the time. He was given finally 2 months to live. Upon receiving this diagnosis, Dad was leaving the hospital when a doctor just happened to mention to him, hey, here's an experimental double lung transplant program going on in the hot bed of medical technology, Jackson, Mississippi. My dad decided to give them a call. They invited him down, and he received the invitation but no promises of what they could do. During the ten years of the progressive lung disease, dad rode a Shwinn Airdyne bike to strengthen his heart, maintain as much lung function as he possibly could, and build body strength and endurance for the challenge that lay ahead. That was my dad.

Dad arrived in Mississippi and walked into the hospital with his portable oxygen tank and cannula, smiling and shaking hands and thanking folks for seeing him. They were shocked because this was not that old man in a wheelchair on oxygen near the end of his life they expected. He passed all qualifications and was accepted into that program.

Six months later not only did dad survive the transplant and two subsequent rejection episodes, he rehabbed, recovered, and returned to South Carolina in September 1988 and was reelected to his tenth term as the Second District Congressman from South Carolina. Dad literally owed this miracle of new life to his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to the love of a family who selflessly made their 19-year-old son's lungs available for transplant after he lost his life in a motorcycle accident. God bless them.

My dad would face another challenge in 1999–2000 when his kidneys failed. I was blessed to donate one of my kidneys to my dad. I always thought the gift of organ donation could save and improve a life, but to donate to my own dad meant more than I could ever explain. I certainly understood that in all my years of staying faithful, training, staying fit, avoiding those things that weren't conducive to a healthy life, which I thought were to live well and play well in sports, right, I was actually being prepared to give my dad the healthiest, strongest kidney possible. Amazing. The transplant went flawlessly, and dad returned to Congress when they reconvened without missing a vote. I returned to work and playing baseball less than 2 weeks later.

Throughout dad's life and mine we held close to those "Five to Stay Alive" foundation principles. I placed the name on these principles because that's what they meant and still mean to me, faith, family, friends, freedom and fitness. In closing I'd like to say thank you to Senator Scott, to this distinguished panel, to all those guests that are visiting with us today virtually, and to tell you thank you for all you're doing for us because aging starts at birth, folks. Be fit, be active, be well, age well. Thank you and God bless.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you, sir.

Dr. Bowers.

**STATEMENT OF PERRY A. BOWERS, DMIN,
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT OF FOCUSED LIVING MINISTRIES,
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA**

Dr. BOWERS, Thank you, Senator Scott, for allowing me the honor of discussing the role of prayer, faith, and spirituality in aging vibrantly and graciously. I'm thrilled to have been married to my beautiful bride for 46 years. We are 68 and 70 respectively and together have two daughters and six grandchildren. I entered the University of Maryland to become the world's greatest architect; however, God had other plans and has called me to build through the lives of men rather than building structures. For 30 years I've been the founding president of Focused Living Ministries, which teaches men to become husbands and fathers and servant leaders that God has called them to be.

I understand that there are many diverse deeply held faiths represented today and online, so I will limit my remarks to the God of the Bible and His Son, Jesus Christ, whom I have personally experienced and whom I serve.

God created us with a unity of body, mind, and spirit; but the soul is often neglected, yet it should be the most important. The spiritual life shapes aging in three vital ways.

The first way a faith in God promotes vibrant aging is by declaring a person's value. We live in a culture and a society where value is based on performance, productivity, position, and possessions; but with age we gradually lose each of these. My 94-year-old father served 26 years in the Navy. Until 75, faith and prayer were not very high priorities in his life. He performed well as a doctor, was productive with many activities, and chaired many prestigious boards. These good things would eventually slip away as he aged. Late in life he discovered the importance of knowing God, not just knowing about God. His new faith taught him that he was created

in God's image and is valued as a father values his children, apart from their performance. This has been the greatest factor to help him age with joy, peace, and patience, rather than becoming critical, complaining, or pining for past years. Understanding that we are created in God's image secures our dignity and worth, even as our bodies fade, mental faculties decline, and abilities diminish.

Secondly, worship of, prayer to, and faith in Christ dramatically impacts aging by giving purpose. God wired us for eternity with a desire to invest in something that will outlive us. After retirement the older men with whom I serve crave to become involved in something greater than themselves. They claim that no matter how fun the game of golf or how satisfying it is to travel, serving others is far more fulfilling. Richard Butler is 81 and was a successful Blue Cross/Blue Shield executive. Several years ago he began a relationship with Jesus Christ, choosing to be fulfilled with God's purpose rather than fill his life with things that don't matter. Like a tireless border collie, he now serves as a school teacher, mentoring those who need remedial help, is his church's fix-anything handyman, and shepherds young men when they drift off course. He understands that a man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package.

Lastly, a secure hope in the living God causes fearless aging. One out of one dies, and the process of aging often creates much anxiety. God invites us to put our faith in his sure character rather than fearing circumstances by placing hope in Christ rather than the hype of a philosophy. Those I serve reason that if Jesus historically lived, died, actually rose from the dead physically as he promised, and presented himself alive with overwhelming evidence, then there is real hope beyond the grave, and that evaporates fear.

My 66-year-old brother Kenny married Kathy, raising three children while battling cancer until she died. He later married Rachel, who also died from cancer. Actually talking to Jesus in prayer every day about the crushing adversity of life has caused Kenny to overcome the fear of death which often rips through his heart as he ages alone. Prayer has shaped him into the most joyous, encouraging, positive man on the planet. Prayer gives him the right perspective and a proper focus on God's character rather than circumstances. No wonder he walks seven miles a day praying for countless people who face tragedy which only God can turn to triumph.

A God given value that brings dignity, an eternal purpose which yields a fulfilled rather than just a filled life, and a secure hope in eternally physical life beyond the grave are just three of the real benefits of aging well that come from an authentic relationship with God. Thank you for listening to my heart.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you, Dr. Bowers.

We'll now enter into the question and answer part of this hearing for the next 15, 20 minutes, hopefully. I will say that we had an opportunity to of course inform the public that we were having this hearing, and so we had some input on some of the questions from the public to some extent. One of the questions that started, Connie, was about the impact of the inflationary effect on our economy; and for seniors living off of a fixed income, the increasing prices are having a real negative impact on their fixed income. The

question that we were going to ask is what resources are available through South Carolina Department on Aging that address the needs of those on fixed incomes, and what are your plans for expanding access to those resources. I think sometimes the knowledge of what's available is really important, so having you as a part of this panel is really helpful. Thank you for being here, and we'll give you a few minutes to answer the question about access.

Ms. MUNN. Thank you, Senator Scott. Yes, one of the resources that we have available, I think education is key.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. MUNN. I just want to say, first of all, it's been a pleasure being here this morning to hear what everyone has to say, and I look forward to working with everyone around the table to bring more resources.

We have on our website, the Department on Aging, it's called Get Care SC, and that is a resource that's web based, but it has all of the resources that are available; over 350 are listed on that web base. It's very easy for someone to go in, a family member, a loved one, to put your ZIP code in, and then that way it will take you to the services. Several of the services listed are like medication, medical equipment, transportation, help with daily tasks; and if you type in that, it will bring up the resources. It's governmental, private, nonprofit, all types of resources are available there, and so that's a resource that we have.

Also the Area Agencies on Aging have an information, referral and assistance specialist; and that is someone that, if you call in to the area agency or call our office, we can connect you, and they can connect you with resources that are available. No matter what the income level is, we can help you with those resources.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Excellent. Thank you, ma'am. One of the things, during your opening statement, you mentioned food security, food insecurity, and it's such an important part of what seniors wrestle with; and not necessarily a question, more so a comment, but just thinking about the importance of the issue of food security, energy security, and medicine. Too often when the economy gets tight and inflation goes up, our seniors are trying to figure out what they can ration, and sometimes they ration their medicine, sometimes they ration their food, sometimes they have to ration the energy.

The importance of your role and the site that you've mentioned, I want you to mention it one more time, please, is incredibly important to folks on a fixed income. We can't take for granted that everyone knows where to go to get all the information that is available. Sometimes we have to reinforce those points because when I travel around and see some of the food kitchens or some of the activities around providing resources to our seniors, it would be helpful to have a portal; and, frankly, you just named a place where you can find out about 350 different opportunities for assistance. While we certainly live in the most prosperous country on earth, there's no doubt that there are too many folks who are still trying to make it paycheck to paycheck or Social Security check to Social Security check. If you would once again mention your site so that we could have that, please.

Ms. MUNN. It's www.getcaresc.com.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you very much.

Ms. MUNN. Thank you.

Senator TIM SCOTT. That's really important.

Dr. Ciccone, you know you're next. I thank you for, A, taking the time to look up drum ball and B, if you want to tell me what it is, I'm happy to listen.

Dr. CICCONE. According to Google, it is a way for people who don't have a lot of mobility to incorporate yoga balls and drum sticks with an instructor who leads them in a rhythm session, encouraging mental acuity, to follow the rhythm, to follow the music, and also get some aerobic exercise in there using upper body.

Senator TIM SCOTT. You did excellent research.

Dr. CICCONE. I've been motivated.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Mr. Spence, I look forward to your answer for drum ball next. What other kinds of activities such as walking, playing pickle ball, or even playing with the grandkids, can be substituted to improve your health as you get older; how can we get our seniors more active? I heard that as a theme around the table, to be honest.

Dr. CICCONE. Well, a lot of the seniors have access to local services and access to a pool, so swimming is a total body exercise.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Yes, sir.

Dr. CICCONE. It's also safe for patients with orthopedic problems because they float; they don't fall. They avoid fractures. There's no stress on the joints. In the Healthy Lifestyles program we concentrate a lot upon reestablishing balance, which is a big problem in seniors. As they become more balanced, bicycling or stationary bike becomes important. It gives you a great workout. Using an elliptical trainer, the cross trainers where you're using upper body and gliding on that is very low impact to the joints. Many of the seniors do have orthopedic issues, and strengthening the muscles around the involved joint creates greater functionality and mobility. We've observed this many times in our patients. We had an older woman. She was I believe 82. She was an avid gardener. She couldn't garden anymore, and when she finished the program she was back in the garden, and she could take care of herself and do the things that really gave her joy.

Senator TIM SCOTT. That's awesome. As a member of the senate, I hate compound questions. I really do. I'm going to ask one anyway. You said something, at least in the notes I wrote down during your opening statement, prevention, prevention, prevention, is what I continued to hear in your comments. The importance of prevention can't be overemphasized, and would you just talk for a minute or so about the importance of how we prevent things from happening as opposed to dealing with them after they happen? You talked about the metabolic rate and the impact, as it slows you grow so to speak.

Dr. CICCONE. Yes.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Are there some things that we can do to prevent us from having the conversations that we oftentimes have with our physicians?

Dr. CICCONE. Yes. Thank you. Let me give you some personal experience.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Yes, sir.

Dr. CICCONE. I trained as an interventional cardiologist, as the guy that did stenting and other important things. I was one of the first board certified and fellowship trained cardiologists in the United States doing those procedures, and I had the unfortunate opportunity to do an emergency angioplasty on a young friend of mine, 37 years of age. He got through it. He was having an acute heart attack, and I came in and stented him, and I committed to prevention at that point. My partners at that time did not embrace prevention, and I was lobbying to have a prevention part of our practice. That was a Saturday night, and on Monday morning I came in and I said, I'm going to start this program, realizing that prevention is more important than intervention in some regards.

There are many diseases that affect us as we progress through life that are completely preventable, heart disease being one of them; not completely preventable, but certainly we can observe major impacts in the incidence of the disease, the morbidities that are associated, the loss of function, the loss of jobs. Prevention is not that hard to do. It involves education, which is going to be very, very important going forward, and I alluded to that in my opening remarks.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Yes.

Dr. CICCONE. As well as addressing metabolic issues that are budding but not fully developed that will, addressed early, prevent end organ damage such as strokes and heart attacks, peripheral arterial disease, kidney failure. That's why prevention is a powerful tool, and it's very cost effective because it doesn't require a lot of heavy lifting on the patient's part, and it usually does not require a lot of medication.

Senator TIM SCOTT. It sounds like the ounce of prevention and the pound of cure.

Dr. CICCONE. It's more like a ton of cure.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Ton of cure. Thank you for that. Let me write that down real quick here. I say that because, when I think about your opening statement, it really focused, at least in me, a sense of urgency of doing what I can do now to either extend healthy living or to prevent some of the challenges that you talked about. Thank you for allowing me to ask you what I hate, which is a compound question because I can never remember the seconds part of the question.

Ms. Hayes, Ms. Kesha, one of the things I saw in your work is to really engage people where they are and your willingness to bring people together, and you have something, the Annual Senior and Caregiver Expo.

Ms. HAYES. Yes.

Senator TIM SCOTT. You also in your comments, you talked about the importance of intergenerational communion, so to speak.

Ms. HAYES. Right.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Gathering your grandparents, your parents, your kids, and maybe, frankly, your mentees maybe; not just within the family, but maybe even outside the family. Will you talk a little bit about the expo as well as the importance of what we learn from the generations that went before us because you were elegant in your presentation about the importance of not forgetting that

the wisdom that has been given to you, you may have the opportunity and the responsibility of taking care of those wisdom givers.

Ms. HAYES. Right.

Senator TIM SCOTT. At the same time there's a generation that is maybe younger than we are that can help feed in energy and vitality into that senior who provided us with wise counsel when we desperately needed it. Another compound question. I apologize for being a hypocrite on the compound questions, but at the end of the day I'd love to hear your perspective.

Ms. HAYES. Thank you. At the Senior and Caregiver Expo this is a time when we have so many different resources, maybe 50 or more entities that come, and they are able to be in one place because it's so hard for seniors to actually get transportation to go to different places to learn about the resources that are available; and most of them aren't tech savvy to go on the computer and really learn and experiment. This is a place where they can come in and go to each table, learn about the things that are there for them; but then also the caregivers are there too, and we are providing a conversation between the older adults and the caregivers. I think the exchange is phenomenal because now they get to talk about things that might be affecting them as far as proper care, and then they also get to learn about each other.

The intergenerational program is so important because the knowledge that's exchanged from one generation to the next, it eliminates the stereotypes and the biases that we have for each other. You know, older adults might have some things that they might be saying about young adults, and vice versa. Also it's just the community awareness that it brings when they are able to have that social connectedness. Then the health benefits for the older adults that get to be involved with younger people just makes them more vibrant, and their self-esteem, knowing that someone is looking up to them and hearing things about their past is just phenomenal, and I think it does so much good for both.

Senator TIM SCOTT. One final question for you, as we transition to my left. You talk a lot about promoting companionship and the necessity of purpose.

Ms. HAYES. Yes.

Senator TIM SCOTT. As we age gracefully. Will you talk a little bit about purpose as we transition to the left there.

Ms. HAYES. Yes. Thank you. Great question. You know, getting older is something that is going to happen, and the purpose of that should be for us to not see the older adult as if they are someone that's a burden to us, but really someone that we can learn from. Then it's our job as a community to make sure that they are contributing in so many different ways in our world. As seniors are living longer, they are investing in small businesses; they're also investing in the workplace.

There's so much we can do to promote and elevate them, making sure that they are part of the economic growth and the sustainability in that and creating opportunities for them to age—well, to have age friendly environments, and I think all of those things show purpose for them. Even when we talk about some ways to promote healthy aging, we're also talking about improving their mobility and transportation, having access to healthcare, making

sure that mobile clinics and different teams are going to them in the underserved population. That's why the federally qualified health centers are so important and the funding for that is necessary. We work with those individuals who help our seniors take care of their diabetes and their hypertension, and that's so important.

Then the affordable community living and housing is important for them to be able to stay with someone where they're not alone in their four walls. Social engagement and companionship, it's a matter of life or death for them. If you're sitting in four walls and you're not talking to anyone and no one's visiting you, who wants to take their diabetic medication; who wants to live? Because they feel like no one cares about them and they have no reason to live, so it's our job to give them that reason.

Senator TIM SCOTT. That is a blessing.

Ms. HAYES. Thank you.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Thank you for that.

Ms. ROSS-KARL, I wanted to transition to you based on purpose because some of what you were talking about, in my opinion, is not just wearing the crown and the sash, it's having a purpose. It seemed to be so fitting that what Ms. Hayes was talking about, companionship and purpose, and what you're working on is not simply how to be your best now; it's how to find your best purpose as well. Your activities that you talked about, climbing mountains and walls, you just are very active, so will you talk to me and talk to us a little bit about the importance of, frankly, how the Senior America Pageant came about, but also how that helps fulfill the void of purpose.

Ms. ROSS-KARL. Thank you. I am so glad I get to go after Ms. Hayes because the Ms. Senior America Pageant was born because its founder was worked in a nursing home, and it was gloomy, and the women were very depressed; and he decided if you put a crown and a sash on that woman and had a pageant, that he would give them purpose. That is exactly how Senior America was born 42 years ago. That purpose is, God gave you two hands. One is to take care of yourself because if you don't take care of yourself, then you can't be helpful to anyone else. The purpose is be the best we can be, and that purpose is just to share our enthusiasm, I mean, we have great performers, we do good works all over. Put us to work, guys. We'll come and see you on your senior day. You know, we'll help launch the new month of September as the National Senior Day. You know, we're in the fall of our lives. What a perfect partnership that would be. Our purpose is just to be helpful wherever we can.

Senator TIM SCOTT. What a blessing. Thank you so much.

Mr. Spence, following these powerful women, you have a tough act to follow.

Mr. SPENCE. Yes.

Senator TIM SCOTT. But you're ready.

Mr. SPENCE. I can't follow that properly, obviously, but in their wake I shall try.

Senator TIM SCOTT. One of the things I'm getting from the entire panel is the importance of resiliency and how do you build resiliency into your life and into your purpose and your passion. You

do that multiple ways, obviously. Dr. Bowers talked about the role of faith in our lives, no matter whether you believe as he does or if you believe as many millions of other Americans who have different faiths. The importance of purpose cannot be denied, and resiliency and purpose seem to be first cousins or synonyms, so to speak.

Would you talk a little bit about, you certainly focused on the physical, but that physical makes you stronger mentally; and then you also spoke about sacrifice. You were in a position, because of your resiliency and a life well invested in physical fitness, to extend the life of your father, which anybody that missed that part missed a major part of this entire time that we have sat here.

Mr. SPENCE. Thank you.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Will you just talk about how you build resiliency, not just from a fitness perspective. I, like you, started off at Health Quest, then went to Life Quest, then went to World Fitness, then went to O2, and I'm at Crunch too; so, literally, I was chuckling in writing down my journey in fitness. Resiliency is a part of that willingness to keep on moving when the place that you were is no longer.

Mr. SPENCE. Yes, sir. Well, resiliency takes on a whole lot of forms.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Yes, sir.

Mr. SPENCE. I'm in awe of our distinguished panel here and the amazing technical aspects of it, but also too just the emotion of it all as well because that's really why we do what we do. The collection of people here I think together have coordinated mind, body, spirit, and it creates something—I believe Henry Ford called it the concept of mastermind. He couldn't have built the automobile, but he knew how to put together a group of people that could build an automobile; and kind of, like they say, the rest is history. I'm actually driving a Ford right now. I think that's a concept, in putting this panel together, and also working together in the Senate and working in the House of Representatives in coordination with a lot of funding for different agencies and everything as well too, the prevention aspect of things. I don't think you can deny how much importance that puts on it. I love the ton of cure instead of the pound of cure. I think that's so much more important because, again, I think money that's spent in prevention creates a return on investment that ultimately will lead to a decrease in the money invested because we're not trying to treat the end result, we're trying to prevent what could occur.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Absolutely.

Mr. SPENCE. That's an ideal structure. What I might say is this too, and I appreciate you mentioning about kind of perseverance and everything as well.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Request yes, sir.

Mr. SPENCE. Life itself, we have this grand idea that it's going to turn out just perfect. I thought, just by what happened in my life, that my opportunity in sports, because I tried to do the right things all the way through, still do, and everything. You know, it was one of the those things where you think, well, gosh, if I'm doing all the right things, all the best things are going to happen to me; and it did all the way through high school. I played four

sports, so I was cross-training, that sort of thing that we do. What I found was it was bringing me success on the field. I was doing well in schooling and everything else too because, again, there is a connection, I think, connection between physical and the mental and the psychological; and I think that's extremely important. Spiritual was also. I was a member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes when I was in high school and also in college at the University of South Carolina.

As I made it to the North/South All-Star Game—and, again, this is my story, but it hits so many people. Everything was laid out for me. I had my scholarship. Everything was going great. I was playing with Freddie Solomon who was my quarterback from Sumter, who was an amazing athlete, God rest him. He was my quarterback, and I started on offense and defense in the all-star game. I said, God has just blessed me with this opportunity. It's amazing. Boy, it just worked great; and we won the game, but I didn't get to play the last half because a fellow tackled me and I broke my ankle just before the first half ended. All of a sudden everything I had laid out before me didn't quite turn out the way I thought it should.

Now, again, I had a spiritual aspect, connecting to Dr. Bowers, that allowed me to kind of understand that it's God's will. I go back to university. Man, I rehab, I trained, and I worked back, stronger than I was before. Gosh, got over there and played and everything else, and it was just going great; and a knee operation. Okay. That's fine. That's another thing. That's fine. Come back from that; another knee operation. Come back from that; another broken ankle. All of a sudden I'm looking at it saying, okay, I thought I was headed to pro ball here or something like that. What do you have in mind for me?

It didn't come immediately, but as my life played out before me, God was using those instances to prepare me for an opportunity to effect other peoples' lives by saying, oh, you've had that happen to you, well, let me tell you something, I can empathize with you. Empathy is gold because when you can empathize with someone and share your story with them, you can create in them an opportunity to try to create their own story that might take them beyond where they were, which they thought maybe that's just the end; maybe I just need to settle. No. Don't want settle. I want you to grow with me, and we're going to grow together through all of this.

I think that's what's important because, again, it does tie in spiritual, mental, physical in the whole concept of it and even together something greater than all of us by ourselves.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Excellent. Thank you. Going to take another five or 6 minutes before we close the hearing out and I'm going to ask another round of rapid-fire questions here.

Dr. Bowers, you mentioned obviously faith a lot; but something you also mentioned that caught my intention was the importance of companionship. Your brother with his two spouses who passed away from cancer; your 46 years of marriage. As we think about aging gracefully, the role of companionship.

Well, a lot of different areas of that, first of all marriage and so forth, we do, when we work with these men throughout the State, we help them learn how to be the husbands—God invented mar-

riage; here's what God's desire and design is for marriage. We help them to learn how to care for that woman, for the woman to care for the man, and that companionship that God's given them. Also friendship. A lot of men don't have friends, deep friends that will walk them through everything. We've got several—every morning somewhere in Columbia we're meeting in men's forums, anywhere between 20 to 40 guys, and there's a tremendous companionship there as well as community. A lot of times, we mentioned it here, but so many times the aged, as you get old, they remove themselves from community instead of getting into community. We've got to be helping each other.

Love the two hands illustration you gave, one to help yourself but also one to help others. We've got to be serving one another. So we emphasize that a lot and the whole idea of scripture talks about community. God, trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is a community. God talks about the church is a community, called out ones. It's throughout scripture. God says, you cannot live apart from being a part of a team.

Thank you very much. As we close out this hearing, and certainly we've enjoyed the answers to the questions. Certainly I, frankly, am enjoying asking questions more than I do answering questions, so this has been a great experience for me. There is, without question, a surge in our Nation right now with the Delta variant and the impact it's having. I think I'd be remiss if I didn't at least ask a quick question of Dr. Ciccone, and perhaps all of us around the table, to talk about the importance of the vaccine and, frankly, of masking up when necessary and important. I know that this is not necessarily a part of the aging theme specifically. Frankly, if you think about the aging community and the most vulnerable community, the pandemic is a major part of it. For me not to mention that, I think I would regret it.

Not only to Dr. Ciccone, but I will say that I've heard some rumors and some facts. I would love for you to weigh in a little bit on this if you don't mind. You may not be prepared for this. I'll ask anyway. I just read some stats that say that President Trump and President Biden and every living president has been vaccinated; that all 50 Governors, Republicans and Democrats, have been vaccinated; that the vast majority of Congress, heading toward 100 percent of Congress, vaccinated; 96 percent of physicians, American physicians, vaccinated. Those who are dying from this pandemic today, 90-plus percent, unvaccinated. Accurate? Thoughts?

Dr. CICCONE. Yes. I think there's a couple of points about the Delta variant. First of all, this is not SARS-2. It's not the original coronavirus. It's much more infectious. It's affecting the younger population symptomatically, whereas SARS-2 did not affect the younger population symptomatically very much at all, and the mortality in that population was virtually zero.

What we're seeing is, nationwide and locally here, about 15 percent of vaccinated persons are contracting the Delta variant and becoming infected. That may be because of waning immunity because most of us were vaccinated, particularly first responders, we were vaccinated in December and January; and we're past that 6-month window where we think that immunity starts to drop off. The importance of vaccination can't be emphasized more. We're

learning more about when we should have boosters and whether those will be effective and how effective they will be.

When you have a virus that affects a lot of people—a virus mutates when it makes a mistake in copying its DNA, and when there's more people infected, there's more opportunity for variations, and we're beginning to see that now with the Mu variant. We don't know enough about that as to whether it's going to be as bad as the Delta variant, but the Delta variant was certainly worse than the original SARS-2 and has put a tremendous strain on our system.

Fortunately, in the Roper St. Francis system, we have tremendous dedication from our nurses, doctors, and from our ancillary staff. Even with best intentions, the kids are getting sick; the moms who are nurses have to stay home and take care of them. The nurses, other ancillary personnel, are subject to infection, and they do get it. We're kind of stressed to the limit here, but because of the flexibility and the leadership that we have in our system, we have been able to manage a real significant crisis. It is something that was unanticipated. We knew that we would always have to flex into certain populations and certain challenges, but we've never been stressed to this level.

I think that, to your point, vaccination is extremely important, masking up, especially in closed situations. You know, like this is fine, but if you're in a closed environment, masking up does help.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Yes.

Dr. CICCONE. I think to get correct information out there is so important. There's been a lot of misinformation, and with social media you can basically put anything out there and it doesn't have to be the truth. I think a consistent message from the government that is factually based will allay a lot of people's fears. A lot of people are afraid because they're not trusting.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Certainly. I know I've been vaccinated and looking forward to the booster, whenever it comes out there.

One other question for the panel for anyone who wants to weigh in specifically to answer this question briefly, as we're committed to getting out of here 3 minutes ago. The importance of virtual opportunities to engage with seniors I think is still top of the mind because, frankly, as we head out the doors today and back into normal life in many ways, one of the goals we'll have is to keep seniors integrated and communicating; and sometimes that's going to require virtual communication, whether it's fitness training, I know that today you can turn your TV on and see 1,000 commercials for how to get a trainer and to do life from a fitness perspective from a distance. Certainly, Ms. Hayes, I think about expos and ways to have people come together maybe virtually. I know that this hearing for the most part is being done virtually to take into consideration the health and well-being of the seniors who hopefully are still tuned in right now.

I think it's really important for us to not leave without giving seniors some encouragement about the ability, the opportunities that may unfold over the next few months of having, frankly, your doctors seen virtually. Virtual healthcare is something that I'm, telemedicine, I've been focused on and will continue to push legislation that makes it more available. From health and fitness to beau-

ty pageants to expos to our Director on Aging, I'd just love to hear just quick comments on how we can encourage our seniors to engage in life virtually and not just sit home, four walls, and asking yourself, is it worth it. The answer, of course, is it's worth it; but let's give them a little reason to understand why we know that it is.

Ms. MUNN. I'll start.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. MUNN. Basically, we have, very quickly, a broadband initiative that we have done with Palmetto Care Connections, which is actually connecting our seniors with telehealth, with being able to talk with their families, and they also provide digital literacy training. What we've found, you know, as we talk about resilience, our seniors are resilient. We have seen that during COVID. They've stepped up. They've been utilizing iPads that we provide for them, and that's a pilot project that we hope to provide across the State. For the Enhance program that we discussed earlier there can be Zoom meetings. Most important, it keeps you connected with family and friends and loved ones and your churches as well. We know all of our churches went remote and Zoom. It gives them that opportunity.

Senator TIM SCOTT. I even figured out how to use Zoom. It's really easy. If I can figure it out, anybody can figure it out, so just know that.

Anything you want to add, Dr. Ciccone?

Dr. CICCONE. Yes. Let me just speak to the telemedicine part of this. COVID gave us bad things, but it also gave us an opportunity to get patients used to telemedicine visits. We're going to go beyond telemedicine. We're going to go to virtual care. Whether that is the social part of it, to give social support to seniors in need and the companionship that was mentioned; or whether it's actually virtual care where you're having meaningful visits with remote patient monitoring. Particularly in this COVID age, where we send patients home from the emergency department with specific criteria to go home, and if you're feeling worse, you let us know, we're relying on the patients, but we don't have remote monitoring. That's something that Roper St. Francis is very much active in in the hospital at home; whereas we'll be able to monitor those patients more carefully with remote patient monitoring and perhaps avoid a lot of admissions, particularly to the ICU, and ultimately avoid mortality in those patients. That's going to be a very burgeoning part of the healthcare market right now.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Excellent. Any other thoughts from anybody else who wants to add in?

Ms. HAYES. I just want to point out that even though we were social distancing physically, I think that we should be mindful that we don't do it emotionally too, that we keep the connectivity there. When there are virtual activities that are happening, all of us need to make sure that we get the word out to those entities that are servicing our aging beauties so that they know about it.

Senator TIM SCOTT. Mr. Spence.

Mr. SPENCE. Just quick, one of my other sidelines is I'm actually a supervisor with South Carolina DHEC. I work with the COVID data entry program. I was vaccinated with Pfizer vaccine back in

March of this year. I see every day, you know those numbers that you see on TV, the teams that I work with, actually we put those out for the upState region and all around the other regions of the State. I've seen the younger population being affected by this Delta variant.

Also, when I hit about the six month point, guess what, I was a break through case. The Delta variant hit me, but because I had been fit, thank goodness, I have a pulse oximeter at home. Checked it regularly. Never did my lung function go below about 95 percent. The key on this, the vaccine may not of have kept me from getting the Delta variant, which is more transmissible. Obviously it's like superglue around your cells. What it did was give me a milder case, but it gave me a long haul. I'm a long hauler. Took me about fiv weeks to get through it. It felt like three-a-day practices or something. The key on that is I got through it. I did not require hospitalization. At no point did I feel like I needed to go there.

I also used for people, to help prevent things, a virtual cycling class that I did. My oldest person was 82 years old. I believe you talked about your golfer. Eighty-two years old; the youngest was about 38 years old. They stayed with me for a year and a half during COVID riding with me, and that was good.

I want to share something from DHEC. A young lady of 102 years old in the upState region went in, and she was interviewed as she was getting vaccinated. They said, why in the world, you're 102 years old, why would you want to get vaccinated. She said I'm 102 years old. I've lived a long time. I ain't through living yet.

Senator TIM SCOTT. I like that.

Mr. SPENCE. I kind of like that.

Senator TIM SCOTT. I'm going to stop on that point right there. There's no better place to stop than at 102, in this discussion. It's good for her to continue living, by the way. Didn't want to be misunderstood there. Let me just say this too, thank you all, this has been fun to me, enjoyable, informative, educational, very helpful. I would say without any question I think the people of South Carolina and around the country that have watched this have left encouraged, inspired, and motivated to do something that they may not have been doing before. Certainly it's been a joy to have this first hearing in South Carolina and would also remember that in the next few decades, hopefully we'll all be here by 2060, couple years away, one out of four Americans will be over the age of 65, one out of four. We are a population aging. Dr. Ciccone talked about the fact that our mortality rate is one for one I think it was, right? That's going to happen, right? Our birth rates are falling, though.

Dr. CICCONE. Yes.

Senator TIM SCOTT. We're doing one thing that is 100 percent guaranteed. The other one we're not doing enough of. We've got some challenges heading our way if we don't figure some things out.

I do want to say thank you to the Waring Senior Center, and specifically to Ms. Elizabeth Bernat, the center's director. She's standing in the back. Thank you for allowing us to use this beautiful location to talk about the importance of living gracefully, especially in our golden years. I'm very proud of this facility. Keith, you

and your family, I thank you for a family of service and servants, actually, more importantly servants.

I will say that at this point, please note that the committee members will have until Wednesday, September 22 to submit questions for the record, something that we do at every hearing. Thank you all for attending. To our virtual audience, I hope you too walk away with a lot of good information. I'm hopeful that you will visit Ms. Connie Munn's website so that you can learn about the 350 ways you may be able to help yourself. If you need more assistance, please look to her site. For all of those who have invested the last 90 minutes with us, we are very thankful for that and look forward to talking to you sometime in the near future. God bless you, and this concludes the hearing.

(Hearing concluded at 11 a.m.)

APPENDIX

Prepared Witness Statements



South Carolina
**DEPARTMENT
ON AGING**

Written Testimony of Connie D. Munn
Director, South Carolina Department on Aging

Field Hearing with U.S. Senator Tim Scott
Wednesday, September 8, 2021

Good morning. I am Connie Munn, and I serve as Director of the South Carolina Department on Aging; it is truly an honor to be with all of you today. Senator Scott, I want to especially thank you for hosting this field hearing, highlighting all of the great progress we are making together as a team here in South Carolina with regard to healthy, vibrant aging.

Throughout the pandemic, the strength of the Aging Network in South Carolina has been tested – and truly showcased. Regional and community partners all across the state have come together in a time of great need, a true testament to the dedication and devotion to those who have a desire to help others when they need it most. While the threat to an older adult's health and well-being has intensified during the pandemic, longstanding partnerships, as well as new connections, have been vital to the continuation of services for our most vulnerable population.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the South Carolina Department on Aging (SCDOA) and Aging Network immediately observed barriers that seniors faced regarding nutrition, and we began to encourage the use of additional nutritional supports to “fill the gap,” such as providing those in need with bags of groceries or assisting with enrollment in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

One such example is when a senior called the Trident Area Agency on Aging because she desperately needed food. She was caring for her husband, a disabled Veteran who was also going through cancer treatment at a Veterans' Affairs (VA) facility. This particular senior did not drive and had to walk to get food from the nearest food source, which was a gas station. The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) was able to provide food from their pantry and connect her with Lowcountry Street Grocery to provide a weekly delivery of eggs and fresh produce to an area deemed a “food desert.”

While this is just one example which illustrates that in order to promote healthy, active, and independent lifestyles, community support and services must be provided from a holistic approach. To live a fruitful life, all dimensions must be assessed, and supports should be tailored to the unique needs of a particular individual. This is why a multitude of evidence-based programming has been offered across South Carolina to enrich the lives of older adults, to improve health and well-being, and to reduce disease and injury. The majority of these programs are funded through The Older Americans Act and are directly implemented by aging network providers that have been certified and trained. Additionally, programming is provided in collaboration with other state agencies and university systems utilizing alternate funding sources. Some examples of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) that have been provided in South Carolina include:

- Powerful Tools for Caregivers, which is a caregiver support program
- falls prevention resources such as Fit & Strong and Enhance Fitness

- Clemson University has partnered with the Administration for Community Living (ACL) on a grant to reduce the fall risk in rural, older South Carolinians
- We know diabetes and arthritis are chronic diseases that affect our older South Carolinians and so to combat diseases some programs we offer are Diabetes Self-Management Program and the Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program.
- The Trident Area Agency on Aging offers a unique program which highlights a partnership between community and clinical linkages with Roper St. Francis Hospital System for the delivery of the Enhance Fitness program.

The SCDOA established a social isolation/loneliness task force which led to construct supports and resources for those older adults most at risk, which are the rural dwelling, minority, and homebound individuals. Some of the projects in progress include:

- 'Senior Kits' – Take-home kits for older adults to enhance emotional, mental, and physical wellness
- iPad loan/management – Through a partnership between S.C. Assistive Technology (part of the University of South Carolina) and participating AAAs

The SCDOA has also been able to form various other partnership projects with federal and state agencies, as well as non-profits, such as the:

- S.C. Nutrition & Health Care Workgroup ('Food is Medicine') – The University of South Carolina SNAP-ED initiative convenes state-level healthy eating and health care partners to increase coordination efforts among the various groups on issues such as state-level policy, systems, and environmental change strategies.
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Grant – A \$1.1 million grant recently received by the SCDOA that will encourage vibrant aging and lifestyles by funding minor home modifications for seniors in 29 counties throughout South Carolina, with the help of an in-house Occupational Therapist and regional AAA assessors.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that the SCDOA recognizes that wellness is a multi-dimensional measure of overall health, integrating the mind, the body, and the spirit. Regardless of social, economic, or environmental conditions, *all* older adults have the right to health and wellness services. While the Older Americans Act provides many direct programs and services for the promotion of health equity, the SCDOA aims to bridge the gap with those entities who do the same – or similar – work. We believe that this task is best accomplished through coordination, cooperation, and collaboration by partnering with other state agencies, non-profits, health systems, and higher-education institutions to produce positive change for South Carolina's older adults. Senator Scott, I again thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony before the Committee today, and I am happy to address any questions or concerns that you may have.

John Ciccone, MD, FACC, ABIHM
Associate Chief Medical Officer
Roper St. Francis Healthcare
Health Care Implications to an Aging Population
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging
September 8, 2021

Overview

The world's population is aging as a consequence of increasing longevity and decreased fertility.

It is estimated that in 2015, the percentage of the world's population aged 65 or older was 9% or 617 million persons. That population is projected to rise to 1 billion persons by 2030 and 1.6 billion by 2050.

Growth in the under 20 year old population is anticipated to be flat and moderately increasing over the next 30 years.

Europe is currently the oldest region with 17.4% of the population aged 65 or older and anticipated to encompass 25% of the population by 2050. In comparison, the same demographic is projected to triple in size in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the fastest growing aging population.

Africa will have a significant rise in the older population but will remain relatively younger due to high fertility rates.

North America will retain its position as the second oldest region with projection of 21.4% aged 65 and older by 2050.

Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death in the U.S. population accounting for one third of the deaths in the U.S. every year affecting nearly 900,000 Americans yearly. The cost is staggering with direct costs of 214 billion dollars and a further cost of 138 billion dollars due to lost job productivity. The non-economic costs further emphasize the magnitude of the problem.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the U.S. accounting for nearly 600,000 deaths annually. As of 2020, the cost to the healthcare system was approximately 174 billion dollars.

Diabetes affects more than 34.2 million Americans with another 88 million having prediabetes, the precursor to Type 2 diabetes and is directly linked to diet and obesity. Diabetes leads to chronic heart and cerebrovascular disease, kidney failure and blindness which negatively affect quality of life and cost an estimated 327 billion dollars in direct cost and lost job productivity.

Obesity is endemic, affecting 19% of children and 42% of adults. Obesity is directly linked to heart disease, diabetes and some cancers at a cost of 147 billion dollars yearly.

Arthritis affects 1 in 4 adults, over 50 million persons in the U.S. It is a leading cause of work disability and a common cause of chronic pain, incurring a total cost to the health care system of 304 billion dollars as of 2013, 164 billion dollars in lost earnings alone.

Alzheimer's disease affects 5.7 million Americans and is the sixth leading cause of death in all adults and the fifth leading cause of death in the aged 65 or older population. It is estimated that the cost associated with treatment will be between 379 billion and 500 billion dollars.

Strategies

Health care expenditures will continue to rise as the population ages due to environmental factors as well as the development of chronic diseases as part of the aging process. Many of these diseases can be prevented or modified by early intervention using lifestyle measures and appropriate introduction of medications which prevent end organ damage.

For example, obesity and poor diet are the common link to metabolic diseases such as diabetes and heart and cerebrovascular disease. Hypertension, (elevated blood pressure), hyperlipidemia, (elevated blood cholesterol), and hyperglycemia, (elevated blood sugar), are the major risk factors for these diseases and can be modified if identified early and impacted by lifestyle changes initially, and medications if needed after implementation of lifestyle changes. Cigarette smoking is another modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular and pulmonary disease which is approachable by either primary preventive strategies or secondary strategies such as smoking cessation and counselling.

An appropriate exercise regimen, tailored to the patient further enhances the comprehensive approach to the patient.

The Healthy Lifestyle Program at Roper St. Francis is an example of a Cardiometabolic Program aimed at reducing risk of chronic disease, normalizing metabolic abnormalities, decreasing the need for medications and improving overall fitness and functionality of the patient.

Fine tuning the diet and setting goals for fitness are essential to this approach. Patients meet with a dietician regularly and adjust diet to a more balanced and healthy plan. Regularly scheduled small group exercise sessions with "homework" assignments on non-gym days improve fitness, overall metabolic abnormalities and improve functionality, particularly in those patients previously limited by orthopedic issues.

The program creates structure and accountability for patients, whose greatest barriers historically have been non-adherence to diet and exercise.

Implications for Cost

The anticipated rise in health care costs due to the aging population are not sustainable. Appropriate strategies to decrease the incidence of chronic diseases and the associated costs to the healthcare system are critical if we are to sustain appropriate access to our population. Even a decrease in incidence of chronic diseases by 10% would result in savings of greater than 100 billion dollars to the

health care system. Using primary and secondary prevention strategies relying upon primarily lifestyle changes are extremely cost effective and will improve quality of life for the aging population. Improved education to the at risk population, in particular, can further enhance the positive impact to cost upon the health care system.

The 21st Century Cures Act mandates that patients have unfettered access to their medical records. Navigating through the maze of lab and imaging reports and physician notes is a daunting task for patients. Providing an organized approach to this information, providing patient approved secure access to medical records to all providers involved in the care of the patient, and utilizing Artificial Intelligence, (AI), to improve patient medical literacy with be an adjunct to the clinical approach.

Remote patient monitoring of patients with chronic diseases and the development of Virtual Care paradigms will further enhance the ability of health care providers to extend and improve care to the at risk population, concentrating efforts to the “high cost” patient using Population Health.

Kesha L. Hayes
Founder of Caring for Aging Beauties
Congressional Hearing Testimony
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging
September 8, 2021

Good morning everyone. Thank you for allowing me to be here today. Thank you to Senator Tim Scott and his Aging Committee for all they are doing for our senior population across South Carolina.

All over the world, there is an elderly man or woman that fought for us to be in a room, fought for us to sit on a board and/or fought for us to be in a seat. We should not take that for granted. It is not just any man or woman, but an Aging Beauty. The name has nothing to do with gender or looks but everything to do with grace and wisdom. Aging Beauty, a person with exemplary wisdom, who should be celebrated and valued daily. Some of us have lost sight of the honor that an Aging Beauty should be shown. My agency was created to make sure that no older adult goes unnoticed and that that honor is bestowed. When we speak of older adults, our mind should not think of someone dying, someone old or even someone helpless. We should automatically think of someone who has been where we are going, who has paved the way for all of us and who has made so many sacrifices in our world for us to operate at our best.

Here is my personal story...I remember falling in love with older adults ever since I was a young child. After years of working with Aging Beauties, I asked my mom where the love came from. She mentioned that I never wanted to play with children my age, but instead sit under the oak tree of my grandparents' house listening to the stories told by them. In listening, I found that older adults were special, honorable and had been through so much in life. Their stories should be saved, shared and used to inspire the next generation. At that moment, while young, I knew I could be the one to make that happen.

I began the path of training healthcare professionals through my organization, Professional Development and Training Services, LLC. We teach EKG, Nurse Aide, Phlebotomy, Clinical Medical Assistant, etc. The training was geared towards all people with different levels of care, but a special emphasis toward our older adults. I wanted older adults to experience proper care and have care provided to them that would be rewarding to them and rewarding for the caregiver giving it. That was not enough for me so to honor them more, I created a special day for them titled: Senior Service Day: Honoring our Elderly Population. Fortunately, I was able to present this to Mayor Stephen Benjamin and the day was quickly pronounced and declared stating that September 12th would be Senior Service Day: Honoring our Elderly Population. Mayor Tony Scully of Camden, SC followed the trend. Now, thanks to Governor Henry McMaster, the day has been proclaimed for the entire state of South Carolina. Because of this,

we can reach thousands of older adults on this day to show companionship and engagement. We had so much fun honoring seniors on that day that I thought it would be best to do it on a regular basis. Also, after meeting Governor McMaster, I was encouraged to birth my nonprofit agency, Caring for Aging Beauties. I saw that older adults did not deserve one day, but every day, to show them that they are deserving of our attention. Caring for Aging Beauties nonprofit provides The Care Lab, a place where family members who are caring for loved ones can come and learn technical skills for FREE. They can also connect with other family members in the same situation and receive peer support. The students who are trained in our trade school use volunteer hours to help these family members learn the technical skill. The students get experience, volunteer hours and a connection with families and seniors before leaving our school. We provide an annual Senior and Caregiver Expo so that seniors and caregivers stay abreast of current resources provided to them. The day is filled with fun, fellowship, self-care, food and lots of music. We also have birthday clubs, pen pal programs, yearly calendars, monthly activities and I can go on and on. We named the programs we created Connecting Generations Program. We just simply love what we do and are blessed to do it.

The biggest reward of this is being able to capture these stories and make a difference in the lives of those that once cared for us.

As one of our participants, **Mary Brevard**, shared, "Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength."

Audrey Hepburn-

"The beauty of a woman is not in a facial mole, but true beauty in a woman is reflected in her soul. It is the caring that she lovingly gives, the passion that she knows. Aging Beauty of a woman with passing years only grows!"

**Testimony of Connie Ross-Karl
Honorary Senior America
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging
September 8, 2021**

Good morning. Thank you, Ranking Member Scott, participants and invited guests for the honor of speaking to you today. As the Senior America State Administrator for South Carolina and 2019 Honorary Senior America, I am proud to introduce you to a 42-year-old anomaly of a national movement of thousands of women whose founder is still a participant; to share my knowledge and experiences in anecdotes about successful aging and to capture how the enthusiasm for life that being a Queen at the age of elegance, 60 or older, dispels five of some the misconceptions of aging.

Among my other duties in the 90s as a marketing executive for the then sixth largest hotel in the world, Imperial Palace Las Vegas, I co-hosted a national television and radio show from the renowned Antique and Classic Auto Collection there for nearly a decade. These priceless, magnificent cars were old but of keen special interest, so a subtle theme is developing.

As TV folks are often asked to judge beauty pageants, I was asked to judge the Miss Nevada Senior America pageant.

One of the most popular TV commercials then was Mr. Whipple, the grocer, scolding customers, "please don't squeeze the Charmin!" Dick Wilson who made 38 movies nobody really remembered, he said, became a household name much later in his life for his series of Charmin toilet paper commercials. His wife, Meg, was one of the senior women competing for the title of Miss Senior Nevada that year, and that chance meeting was also my first introduction to Senior America as well as the start of a friendship with Meg and Dick.

He described acting in commercials as "the hardest thing to do in the entire acting realm." You've got about 30 seconds to introduce yourself,

introduce the product, say something nice about it and get off gracefully."

The Senior America Pageant recognizes physical fitness, of course, and seeks to emphasize that fitness comes in many shapes and sizes and that true beauty is a matter of insight as well as eyesight. As part of the judging process, therefore, each contestant also shares her own commercial, her personal "Philosophy of Life" with the audience so that the judges may develop an insight into each lady's own inner beauty. The thirty-second philosophy isn't a biography, but rather the wisdom that the contestant wishes to share with the younger generation. As Dick Wilson warned, this is much tougher than it appears. In fact, it has been described by many contestants as the most terrifying 30 seconds of their lives.

Misconception one: If you're interested in staying healthy as you age — and living longer — you might want to add a different set of muscles to your workout routine as do Senior America queens: your creative ones. Ongoing research suggests that creativity may be key to healthy aging. Studies show that participating in activities such as singing, theater performance and visual artistry could support the well-being of older adults, and that creativity, which is related to the personality trait of openness, can lead to greater longevity.

An onstage talent, gorgeous gown walk and personal interview by a panel of judges complete the entry criteria. By giving women 60 years of age and older an opportunity to display their "inner beauty," talents, and elegance, the pageant honors the achievements of senior women and motivates and encourages them to utilize their full potential to share a positive outlook on life with others. Participants represent a diverse, grass-roots, cross section of America. If you are looking for a group to promote successful aging, and want boots on the ground in any state and territory in the United States, we are here to help in high heels, gowns and crowns.

Hook us up with your senior centers; senior living facilities where we visit and entertain regularly; and departments of aging.

I bring you greetings and remembrances today from founder Dr. Al Mott and his wife, Elizabeth “Betsy” Apello Mott, president of Senior America. So we need to go back 20 years with Betsy and Al and revisit Las Vegas 2001.

Huge 60s stars Steve Rossi and Marty Allen, of the comedy team of Allen and Rossi, who appeared on more than 700 television shows, including two Ed Sullivan episodes on which the Beatles performed, were regular guests on our TV show. The title of one of their comedy albums was their signature catch phrase of "Hello Dere!" Still a popular greeting today...Steve passed at a young 82, but Marty lived for a wonderful 95 years.

Steve knew the Mott's. He introduced them to me and to the Imperial Palace as a possible venue to return the national pageant to Las Vegas. It was a marriage that was to last through 2008 there and even after the Imperial Palace was purchased and the pageant moved onto the famed home of Miss America, the Boardwalk in Atlantic City, where it has stayed until 2020. Then, because of Covid, the first virtual pageant was just held on August 22.

At the Imperial Palace, the younger male execs teased me mercilessly about hosting a pageant for old women, even making a tin-foil crown and ribbon sash for me as Ms. Senior Imperial Palace. I was already old to them in my mid-50s...Then the contestants arrived and the magic that is the spirit of Senior America began.

Senior America was not only good heads-in-beds hotel business, the candidates were knock-outs of beauty, brains, charm and show-stopping

talent. These guys were mesmerized and couldn't stop peeking into rehearsals and competitions. When Grandma enters a pageant, everybody comes! Restaurants and showrooms were full of active seniors and their friends and families. It was standing room only for the preliminaries and the finals. The state queens were like rock stars then and today. Steve and I had the honor and privilege of co-hosting the finals that first year back in Vegas.

Misconceptions two and three: Seniors are great business. And Senior America Queens may be old, but they're still hot!

According to Betsy Mott, the Ms. Senior America mission statement says that seniors are America's national treasure, and the foundation upon which our youth can build a better society, by way of our wisdom and experience. What we've learned as the years have passed, though, is that it's the pageant events themselves that are forging two types of an intangible, but very precious, asset, now called "social capital." It's the value derived from positive connections between people.

"People entering *seniorhood* have moved past their childhood friendships, away from their college pals, and out of the gang at the office. We tell them we're the last stop on the bus line—the friends they make with us are the ones they'll keep until the end. Friendships in *seniorhood* are more important than our friendships in youth—we need fun, and companionship, but we also need each other.

"When our local groups connect, friendships bloom across the country. We can travel to any state in the nation and not have to get a hotel room. We can just call a queen! This is the bridging type of social capital, and our bridges not only take us, but welcome us, into each other's worlds. We delight in the riches of each other's talents, outlooks and cultures. We learn from one another; our conversations are fresh and new; and we listen to one another because we really are hearing that story for the first time."

Misconception four: Senior can form important friendships late in life

that last to the end of life. Through social capital and its bridging effect into different, unique worlds, seniors can enjoy better physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. When Grandma's happy, everyone's happy...

Helping each other may be as simple as straightening a crown or as complicated as staying up all night putting ice on the face of a queen who has fallen but still has to escort on the red carpet, give out awards and perform the next day in a TV show produced for an audience of 11 million people. I was the fallen queen, SC10 Ida Brinkley was my diligent nurse. Falls, such as breaking a leg or a hip are our nemesis and happen sometimes at such events. A queen fell and broke her leg at the same event two years prior. She came back and won a national open age group pageant last year. SC15 Rebecca Rose Holley is strong, remarkable and determined. One of my sisters from 2007 fell at the national pageant, broke her hip, and was in recovery for about two years. Fran Owens came back and is now President of the National Senior America Alumni Association. She is represented here today by vice president Linda Anthony NC13.

We do watch out for and help each other get through just about everything. Betsy tells me that she has personally seen the support when the family has a problem or when a spouse passes away, which is sadly common among senior queens. Bernadette Dudek NJ9 lost her husband, the love of her life, more than a decade ago when she was living in New Jersey. The New Jersey Senior America organization embraced her and invited her to be a candidate for Ms. Senior New Jersey. On the second try, she won the state title and went on to be a finalist in the national pageant in 2009. She credits that sisterhood with uplifting and getting her through her grief. She competed again in the national pageant 10 years later as SC19, as she now lives in Ft. Mill SC.

We do uplift one another to be the best we can be, from inspiring others recovering from injury or illness to things as simple as good vision and dental health; organizing convenient group travel to showcases and events or just to be together; and always making sure we walk together and count noses on everyone's whereabouts when traveling. Moreover,

referencing the importance of insight as well as eyesight, we make sure at least one of us can still drive at night!

We do have our share of poignant moments. We all nearly passed out when Jon Bon Jovi dropped in backstage in Atlantic City, just because he was in the neighborhood. Dee Dee Sharp not only taught us to mash potato, she has joined us a judge, volunteer and now friend. Queens have been to the White House and are celebrities themselves. Laura Mcfayden SC12 was the best Judy Garland tribute artist in the world in 2012 and was first runner up to California Queen Elizabeth Howard who was a vocal coach for Pricilla Presley and Sting, among many others...Carolyn Curlew, Senior America 13, was lead singer in the Charlie Daniels Band.

I wore my Senior America banner when I climbed the Great Wall of China with an entourage of 40 young orchestra protégés on a cultural exchange and as my family walked behind the caisson carrying the remains of my WWII parents who were being laid to rest in Arlington in 2016 and was later swarmed that afternoon by wonderful South Carolina students visiting the Iwo Jima monument who saw my banner and wanted pictures! My Senior America banner and that sisterhood has been there for me and for thousands of others.

The Ms. Senior America Pageant, is a non-profit corporation designed not only to enrich the lives of seniors but also to tap their energy to enrich the lives of others. It is dedicated to diversity. As an organization it depends on volunteers and sponsors to continue to present the positive aspects of aging. The organization encourages queens to also have personal platforms, as well as that of Senior America, and offers a local, state and national stage and exposure for those philanthropies. Popular platforms have included supporting veterans, American Red Cross, animal welfare, Meals on Wheels and so many more. One of the most singular has been Marlisa K. Small's Bold and Beautiful Wigs for Cancer which gives a free, high quality out-of-the-box wig to men, women and children in treatment for cancer. Hers went from a local charity to national in conjunction with her reign as Ms. South Carolina Senior America 2018. Raquel Welch learned about Marlisa and that she

gives away Rachel's wigs through her charity. She wanted to help and donated a stunning personal gown for Marlisa to auction at her annual fund-raising gala. It brought \$10,000!

Fast forward from Vegas, I moved with my family, everybody from two to 82, to the Grand Strand of Myrtle Beach. I worked for an advertising agency who represented the Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce, and I was now 60. I was asked to come up with some creative ideas to put heads in beds in Myrtle Beach. Remember that subtle theme? I called Dr. Mott. The venues did not work out to host the national pageant, but I was named Ms. SC Senior America 2007 and was first runner up to the national queen that year. I have now actively worked in the aging community for more than 20 years and have lots more stories...

So, last and Misconception five: Pageants are not finite at any age. We are more than queens of the old people. There are many women deserving of recognition, and participants truly do represent a cross section of America.

Thank you for helping us in honoring the "Age of Elegance," women 60 and above in this exciting and constructive program:

Meet mother-daughter North Carolina senior queens, former high school chemistry lab partner of Bandstand fame, Dick Clark, Sarah Brooks, 93 1/2, and daughter Frann Brooks Griffen, president of the NC Cameo Club. They are one of three mother/daughter queens participating, one such mother served in World War II and was Ms. Veteran America.

Dreisa Sherrill, reigning Ms. Senior World and Ms. SC Senior America 2022 and Gary Sherrill, certified Miss America judge and a North Carolina Field Director for Miss America.

Joe Flowers, co-state administrator for SC Senior America, certified Miss America judge and a Miss America local executive director.

Welcome the new Ms. Senior America 2021, Laura Morgan, and her king, Dr. Jeff Morgan, Chief of Staff - Fayetteville VA Coastal Carolina Healthcare System. Laura is the first national queen from North

Carolina and a first-ever virtual national queen. Congratulations, Laura. We are all so proud of you and look forward to your memorable reign.

More than a beauty pageant, Senior America is *a re-affirmation of life and self-worth.*

**Testimony of Floyd Davidson Spence, Jr.
Owner and Instructor of Lake Murray Fitness Cycle, LLC
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging
September 8, 2021**

Good morning Ranking Member Scott and Distinguished Panel. I am honored to share with you how my life's journey has allowed me the opportunity to positively affect the lives of others through "Five to Stay Alive" Foundation Principles: Faith, Family, Friends, Freedom, and Fitness. They are values Momma and Daddy imparted to teach us the price that has been paid to protect our liberties, the importance of an active lifestyle, and appreciation to God for the beauty of His creation.

Beginning some 68 years ago, my life was active from the start. My Dad, Floyd Spence and Mom, Lu Spence moved to Lake Murray outside of Lexington, SC when I was about 3 years old. Dad helped build our home so learning about physical activity was just a natural part of growing up.

I started playing baseball and football as soon as I was old enough to play Little League/Dixie Youth Baseball and Youth Football. I was fortunate enough to enjoy some success and my Dad along with some great coaches, mentors and friends gave me some wonderful advice: If you want to excel in sports, you should train well and consistently, don't settle into just one sport and set yourself up for success by not drinking, not smoking and not doing drugs. To a kid of 8 to 10 years of age, I believed that advice was gold, and so for the remainder of my life, I have followed it.

God's plan has led me to Nautilus Sports Medical & Fitness, then St. Andrews Fitness, Gold's Gym, MUV Fitness, Lake Murray Fitness Cycle, Dynamic Health/Fitness and Crunch Fitness where I was responsible for instructing classes and training people of all ages, needs, and interests. My journey is filled with ordinary people who have done extraordinary and miraculous things because they made a commitment to themselves to live life active and well. My active life, my early decisions and even my injuries and challenges were all part of the Master's Plan not only for me but for my Dad.

My Dad developed COPD in his 50's and by 60 he was living with 5% total lung function on 24-hour oxygen in a wheelchair much of the time and given two months to live. When leaving the facility after receiving this news, a Doctor told Dad that there was an Experimental Double Lung Transplant Program at the

University of Mississippi Medical Center. Dad received an invitation but no promises especially given his age. During the 10 years of the progressive lung disease, Dad rode a Schwinn Airdyne bike to strengthen his heart, maintain as much lung function as possible and build body strength and endurance for the challenge ahead.

Dad arrived in Mississippi and *walked* into the hospital with his portable oxygen tank and cannula, smiling and thanking them for seeing him. They were shocked because this was not an old man in a wheelchair, on oxygen, near the end of his life. He passed all qualifications and was accepted into the program.

Six months later, not only did Dad survive the transplant and two subsequent rejection episodes, he rehabbed, recovered and returned to SC in September 1988 and was re-elected to his 10th term as the 2nd District Congressman from SC. Dad literally owed this miracle of new life to his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and to the love of a family who selflessly made their 19-year-old son's lungs available for transplant after he lost his life in a motorcycle accident. God bless them.

My Dad would face another challenge in 1999-2000 when his kidneys failed again. I was blessed to donate one of my kidneys to my Dad. I always thought the gift of organ donation could save or improve a life but to donate to my own Dad meant more than I could ever explain. I suddenly understood that in all of the years of staying faithful, training, staying fit, avoiding those things that weren't conducive to a healthy life, which I thought were to live well and to play well, I was actually being prepared to give my Dad the healthiest strongest kidney possible! Amazing! The transplant went flawlessly and Dad returned to Congress when they reconvened without missing a vote. I returned to work and playing baseball less than two weeks later.

Throughout Dad's life and mine we held close those "Five to Stay Alive" Foundation Principles. I placed the name on these principles because that's what they meant and still mean to me:

Faith, Family, Friends, Freedom and Fitness

Be Fit, Be Active, Be Well, Age Well. Thank you and God Bless.

Testimony of Dr. Perry A. Bowers
Founder and President of Focused Living Ministries based in Columbia, SC
Promoting Healthy Aging:
Living Your Best Life Long Into Your Golden Years
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging
September 8, 2021

I want to thank Chairman Senator Casey, Senator Tim Scott, and the other senators who serve on the Special Committee on Aging for allowing me the honor of discussing the role of prayer, faith and spirituality in promoting a lifestyle of vibrant and graceful aging.

My name is Dr. Perry Bowers. I am thrilled to be accompanied by my beautiful bride, Janet, of 46 years. We are 68 and 70 respectively and together have two daughters and six grandchildren. I entered the University of Maryland in 1972 to become the world's greatest architect. However, God had other plans and has called me as a pastor to build the lives of men rather than building structures. For 30 years I have been the founder and president of Focused Living Ministries which teaches men across the state of South Carolina to focus on and live for Christ. Together we serve hundreds of men each week from their 20s into their 90s by helping them to become the husbands, fathers and servant leaders in their communities that God has called them to be.

I understand that there are many diverse, deeply held faiths represented today, so I will limit my remarks to the God of the Bible and His Son, Jesus Christ whom I have personally experienced.

God created us with a unity of *body, mind* and *soul* (or *spirit*). The soul is most often neglected yet it should be the most important. It is the spiritual aspect of life that has the greatest impact in helping us to age in the most vibrant, healthy and satisfying way.

The spiritual aspect of aging shapes three vital areas of life: Value, purpose and hope.

Value: Perhaps the most important way a vital faith in the God of the Bible promotes vibrant aging is by declaring a person's *value*. We live in a society where value is often based on *performance, productivity, position* and the ability to enjoy *possessions*. With age we gradually lose each of these through retirement, declining health, or inability to function well.

My 93 year old father served 26 years in the medical field of the United States Navy and retired as captain. Until 75, faith, prayer, a church community or biblical life principles were not high priorities. To his credit, my father worked hard to excel in his performance as a doctor, to be productive with many activities, to chair several prestigious boards and to enjoy his possessions. He wisely realized that these good things could not be sustained and that they should not define a person's value. At that time his Creator graciously helped him understand that it was not enough to know about God, but to actually know Him in a growing relationship.

Through his new found faith he learned that real value was not based on his contributions, accomplishments, status or successes. His real value was that he was created in God's image and is valued by his Creator just as a father highly values his children apart from their performance. My father would be the first to share that the value assigned to him by God as created in His

image has been the single greatest factor in helping him to age with joy, peace, and patience rather than becoming calloused, critical or complaining while wishing for the better days of younger years. My father's days are now filled using his surgical skills in making intricate model ships to bless others, encouraging his great grandchildren and mentoring students in the medical field many of whom he taught 45 years ago. As age gradually removes the things upon which he formerly built his worth, his value before God remains secure.

An understanding that we are created in God's image gives us a value far greater than plants or animals. Our dignity and worth are sure even as our bodies erode, mental faculties decline, abilities diminish, and sense of societal contributions fade. When we understand our true value we can authentically love, esteem and treat with great dignity those who look, believe, live, act, think and vote differently than we do.

Purpose: Another way in which worship of God, prayer to God and faith in God dramatically impacts life as we age is *purpose*. God created us with an inherent desire to live for and invest ourselves in something that will outlive us. He wired us for eternity. I weekly talk to men in their 70s, who after a few months of retirement, crave to become involved in something much greater than their own lives. They consistently claim that no matter how fun the game of golf or how satisfying to clean their garage (for the 5th time) or how enjoyable it is to travel our country, serving a purpose greater than themselves by serving others is far more fulfilling.

My good friend, Dickie Butler is 81 and had a successful career as an executive with Blue Cross Blue Shield. Several years ago he began a relationship with the God of the Bible. He soon realized that following God was not keeping a list of rules but in growing a relationship. Over the past 4 years his mindset has changed from an "*I got to*" into a "*I get to*" attitude. He is busy now serving as a substitute elementary school teacher several days a week and mentoring young boys who need remedial help with math. In spite of arthritis and a hip replacement he is the fix anything handyman at his church. Perhaps he shines most shepherding younger men when they drift off course in life or forget their real priorities. Like a tireless border collie, Dickie gently yet energetically guides men to refocus on their families. He understands that a man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package. So he wisely chose to be *fulfilled* with God's life purpose rather than *fill* his life with things which don't matter. Motivated by God's purpose, the more he ages, the more energized he becomes as he invests his life in the next generation.

Hope: A last powerful benefit of a vibrant relationship with the living God as we age is a solid *hope*. Death is a fact of life as one out of one dies. The process of aging and dying can create a great deal of fear. God invites us to build a faith around His sure *character* rather than fear the *circumstances* we face. What gives the aging men I serve hope is that their faith is not in a philosophy called Christianity but faith in Christ. They reason that if Jesus historically lived, died, actually rose physically from the dead as promised and then presented Himself alive with overwhelming historical evidence, then there is real and eternal hope on both sides of the grave.

My 66 year old brother, Kenny, lives in Gaithersburg Maryland, married his Junior High sweetheart and they raised 3 wonderful children. For years she battled cancer and died. He later married Rachel who, after 5 years, also passed away from cancer. How has my brother overcome the fear of death and adversity which rip through his heart as he ages alone? What enables him to

be the most joyous, encouraging, positive, uplifting man on the planet? Kenny would say that actually talking to his living God in prayer about the crushing needs of others makes him so. Prayer gives him the right perspective he needs and a proper focus on God's character rather than circumstance. That is why he walks 7 miles a day praying for countless people who are facing cancer or severe adversity in their families. He even contacts my friends he has never met just to encourage them with the hope he has experienced in Christ in order to temper the hype to which they cling.

I could tell of many others whose hope in a living Christ has caused them to age vibrantly even when confronted with crushing circumstances. My pilot friend, Don (70) who soars above his fears though his 27 year old son died in a plane accident. Or Claire (75), whose hope in Christ brings joy and peace to others though her 74 year old husband died of Covid last month.

A God given value that brings dignity, an eternal purpose which yields a fulfilled life rather than merely a filled life, and a secure hope in an eternally physical life beyond the grave are just three of the real benefits of aging well that come from an authentic relationship with the living God.

Thank you for listening to my heart.