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CHIP Title: Building a One-Stop Low Vision Rehabilitation Center

Project Description:

Permanent vision loss is prevalent among the aging and will continue to rise. There are gaps and barriers resulting from fragmented care locally and globally. The health inequity among the aging, visually impaired population is also a public health issue with an economic burden on state and federal resources. The CDC reports that 4.5M over age 40 report that they are blind. This number is expected double to 9M by 2050. There are 21M more who reports having “vision problems” not correctable with conventional glasses, contact lenses, or refractive laser surgery. California spends up to \$14B for this population alone (one of the highest states), with medical costs totaling \$5.7B annually and \$3.4B for the 65 and older age group. People with severe vision impairment are more likely to have poor health and comorbidities, and 59% of these individuals reported having a fall in the previous year (CDC, 2022).

Patients with all levels of visual impairment may have difficulties performing activities of daily living, resulting in decreased quality of life. The ideal model has been tested at the Veterans Affairs, where I have spent the past ten years implementing best practices. The training programs are goal-oriented and successfully help individuals reintegrate into daily life activities. The feedback from Veteran patients on the impact on their quality of life and mental health has been overwhelmingly positive. This CHIP is aimed to scale a similar sustainable and holistic model that is not currently available to the broader community.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned:

- The project involved almost 100 interviews that included but are not limited to professionals with various levels of interdisciplinary expertise; business, financial and legal advisors; venture capitalists and commercial property investors; community and government agencies and past legislators and lobbyists; peers, patients, and caregivers.
- Both patients and healthcare providers are unaware that 80% of patients can regain functional vision with specialty low vision aids, electronic devices, and advanced guided technology.
- Restorative vision aids, devices, and technology is not covered by CMS or health plans.
- This CHIP aligns with the goals of Cal AIM (California Advancing and Innovating): provide better outcomes by utilizing non-clinical interventions focused on the whole person care approach; target the growing aging population and reduce per capita cost over time.

Next Steps:

- Form a non-profit for donations and grants for durable medical equipment (DME) such as electronic magnifiers, reading devices, and head-borne technology for improved mobility in the home and community.
- Apply for the Department of Rehabilitation OIB Grant.