



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JULY 2, 2020**

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**Community Health Endowment Announces \$2.5 Million Resiliency Fund**

**LINCOLN, Neb** – The Board of Trustees of the Community Health Endowment of Lincoln (CHE) today announced the establishment of a Resiliency Fund of up to \$2.5 million to support the community’s efforts to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. CHE also established new funding priorities around health equity, human connection, and embracing opportunity. As part of the announcement, Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird said, “As a municipal endowment, CHE is unique in the nation in its focus and structure. We are truly fortunate to have CHE as an asset and a catalyst for building health and resilience for Lincoln’s bright future.”

Kim Moore, Vice Chair of the CHE Board of Trustees and Chair of the Board’s Funding Committee, said the Resiliency Fund will complement the efforts of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, city leadership, state and federal initiatives, and medical professionals as Lincoln’s non-profits and public agencies move forward from urgent pandemic response through recovery to a resilient, thriving community for all. “CHE recognizes the great challenge that the pandemic has presented to our community and to the people who share our mission of making Lincoln the healthiest community in the nation. This Resiliency Fund and our new funding priorities will help make it possible for Lincoln and all its residents to come back stronger – and healthier – than before.”

Moore noted, “This pandemic has shone a harsh light on health disparities that existed in Lincoln long before the COVID-19. Through its Health Equity priority, CHE will focus funding on understanding and addressing health disparities that affect people who are disproportionately impacted due to race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.” COVID-19 has also isolated many in our community who were already vulnerable. Moore added, “We know that social isolation has been linked to increases in dementia and increased risk of heart disease and stroke. A thriving community is rooted in human connection and

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COVID-19 has put that more at risk than ever. So, CHE has established a funding priority, Human Connection, to encourage family, neighborhood, group, intergenerational and community connections.”

CHE President and CEO Lori Seibel reported that the third funding priority, Embracing Opportunity, was directly informed by CHE’s current grantees. “At the height of the pandemic,” Seibel said, “we reached out to each of our current grantees by phone. They told us that while the challenges were many and real, they also saw opportunity amid the challenges. We want to take advantage of these ‘lessons learned’ and how new ways of operating and serving clients can lead to sustainable solutions.”

The CHE Resiliency Fund will encompass the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 grant cycles. Applications for the Fall 2020 cycle are due by noon on Friday, August 21, and must be submitted online. More information about the funding priorities and the application process are available on the CHE website, [www.chelincoln.org](http://www.chelincoln.org). Funding from this cycle will be available on January 1, 2021.

The CHE Board of Trustees suspended regular grant making in March until the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was more fully understood. Since then, CHE has provided more than \$200,000 in COVID-19 related discretionary funding to several local agencies and to the COVID-19 Response Fund.

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## Resiliency Fund Priorities

### Health Equity

*“Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.”  
(Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, May 2017)*

Not all residents of Lincoln have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic the same way. Data clearly shows that people of color have had disproportionate exposure and illness. COVID-19 has shone a harsh light on health disparities that existed in Lincoln long before this pandemic. CHE will focus funding on understanding and addressing health disparities that affect people who are marginalized or excluded due to race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

CHE strongly encourages engaging those most affected by health inequities in the design and development of projects intended to reduce disparities.

Examples of project areas could include, but are not limited to:

- identifying and measuring health disparities and social inequities,
- investing in health and social infrastructure that fosters equity, and/or
- establishing and empowering programs and systems that promote health equity.

### Human Connection

A thriving community is rooted in human connection. Loneliness is at the root of many public health threats, including alcohol/drug addiction, suicide, violence, mental illness, physical illness, and cognitive decline.

Social isolation has been linked to a 50% increase in dementia, a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). The damaging effects of loneliness on health are not restricted to any age or ethnic group. Based on a variety of studies, Dr. Vivek Murthy, former U.S. Surgeon General, reports that the impact of social isolation and loneliness on longevity equals that of smoking 15 cigarettes a day and exceeds the risks associated with obesity, excessive alcohol consumption and lack of exercise.

The physical distancing and social isolation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted our need for human connection and may result in long-term, serious consequences

for Lincoln without an intentional response. CHE will focus funding on addressing the impact of social isolation on vulnerable populations.

Examples of project areas could include, but are not limited to:

- building stronger individual and family connections,
- building stronger neighborhood and group connections including intergenerational approaches, and/or
- building high-quality connections at a community level.

### **Embracing Opportunity**

Non-profit agencies told CHE that, despite the many challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities also exist. CHE will focus funding on 'lessons learned' from the COVID-19 pandemic and how these "new ways of doing business" can lead to sustainable solutions and approaches.

Examples of project areas could include, but are not limited to:

- creative and innovative service delivery,
- non-traditional collaborations and shared agency function,
- technology solutions, and/or
- program re-alignments and staff retraining.