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ALL IN Food as Medicine Program Launches New Site at Lifelong Medical Care Health Center

Initiative Furthers County Efforts to Address Food Insecurity, Improve Health Outcomes

Berkeley - ALL IN Alameda County (ALL IN) has announced the most recent expansion of its Food as Medicine initiative with the February 1st launch of a new site at Lifelong Medical Care (LLMC). This innovative partnership will further the program's goal of linking food systems and healthcare resources to improve health outcomes in underserved communities throughout Alameda County.

The program will open at Lifelong Ashby Health Center, a community facility that services disadvantaged residents - including families, the disabled, and the elderly - in Berkeley and North Oakland. This new site - now one of seven operating in Alameda County - was created thanks to funding from Alameda Alliance for Health, the USDA Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, and Stupski Foundation, as well as primary programmatic partners Dig Deep Farms and Open Source Wellness.

The Food as Medicine initiative improves the overall health of communities by increasing utilization of nutritious and affordable food through its innovative prescription program. Through collaboration among residents, schools, healthcare institutions, government, community-based organizations, and the private sector, the program emphasizes the relationship between food security and patient health by providing patients and families access to the food and nutrition resources they need - similar to any other prescription.

"Food as Medicine has become an invaluable tool for addressing health disparities in our most vulnerable communities - disparities that have been exacerbated further by COVID-19," said Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan. "I am grateful for the invaluable partnerships that ALL IN has established with community clinics like LLMC who are committed to improving the quality of life for all County residents."

By focusing on social determinants of health, identifying barriers to nutritious food, establishing clinical interventions, and providing food insecurity screenings, the LLMC site will follow the Food as Medicine model of treating, preventing, and reversing chronic conditions such as diabetes and obesity. This will enable LLMC to utilize healthy food interventions in combination with group behavioral support to improve health, socio-emotional wellbeing, and food security for underserved residents.

“With the added stress and economic insecurity caused by the COVID pandemic - particularly for communities of color - ALL IN’s Food as Medicine initiative at the Lifelong Ashby Health Center has arrived at a critical moment,” said Keith Carson, President of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors. “Through this innovative and holistic approach, it is my hope that we continue to break down barriers to food access and that more people in Alameda County will achieve greater health and well-being.”

Food insecurity, or lack of access to healthy food, has been linked to numerous adverse health outcomes. Individuals with chronic diseases have also seen their conditions exacerbated by COVID-19, as Americans dealing with obesity, diabetes, heart failure, and chronic kidney disease are significantly more likely to be hospitalized due to COVID-19. In addition, food insecurity is far more prevalent in communities of color, including being almost twice as prevalent among African American residents.

“More than 130 million Americans are currently affected by chronic diseases that are often preventable and reversible. And COVID has amplified other health crises, including food insecurity, social isolation, and racism,” said Dr. Steven Chen, Chief Medical Officer of ALL IN. “This partnership with LLMC will allow our systems of care to address structural determinants of both poor health and chronic disease to ensure more equitable health outcomes for all County residents.”

ALL IN is part of a multi-sector collaboration to expand Food as Medicine, reinvent public safety, eliminate poverty, and support local growers. The program has sites at Native American Health Center, Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center and Hayward Wellness Center, as well as several smaller Food Pharmacies. In addition, Stanford University, University of California San Francisco, the Community Health Center Network, and Alameda Alliance for Health are evaluating the program’s impact on health outcomes, hospitalizations, and food insecurity.

To learn more about Food as Medicine efforts, visit <http://www.acgov.org/allin/>

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About Supervisor Wilma Chan

Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan represents District 3, which includes the cities of Alameda, San Leandro, parts of Oakland including Chinatown, Jack London, Fruitvale and San Antonio neighborhoods, and the unincorporated communities of San Lorenzo and Hayward Acres. She is currently Chair of the Health Committee, Unincorporated Services Committee, and ALL IN Steering Committee, and a member of the County’s Personnel, Administrative, and Legislative Committee, Budget Workgroup, and Ad Hoc Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights. For more on Supervisor Chan’s accomplishments and initiatives, please visit www.acgov.gov/board/district3 or connect on Facebook with “Supervisor Wilma Chan.”