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**Critical California Senior Health Issues Explored
at Bay Area Senior Health Policy Forum**

San Francisco, CA, December 1, 2011 – Stakeholders including service providers, senior advocates, influential policymakers and a busload of seniors from Santa Clara County descended upon last week’s Bay Area Senior Health Policy Forum in San Francisco to find a common voice and inspire creative ways to work together to inform California’s rapidly changing environment for senior health policy. Presented by On Lok Lifeways and Center for Elders’ Independence at St. Mary’s Cathedral on Wednesday, November 30, the forum addressed the state’s health care crisis and encouraged regional collaboration between Bay Area counties to advocate for solutions.

“California’s over-65 population is rapidly increasing and will double in the next 25 years, while our organizations and communities are experiencing funding cuts and dwindling resources,” says Peter Szutu, CEO of Center for Elders’ Independence. “The Bay Area Senior Health Policy Forum was designed to strengthen our resolve, knowledge and advocacy skills in this daunting economic and political environment and ultimately, together, strengthen the safety net for California’s seniors.”

Discussing current policy and funding initiatives were representatives at the federal, state and county levels including California Assemblymember Nancy Skinner; Melanie Bella, Director of the Medicare-Medicaid Coordination Office at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); Diana Dooley, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency; Jean Fraser, Chief of the San Mateo County Health System; Joanne Handy, President and CEO of Aging Services of California; Anne Hinton, Executive Director of the San Francisco Department of Aging and Adult Services, David Ishida, Regional Administrator for the Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Warren Lyons, Chief of Strategy Integration Officer from Alameda County Medical Center; and Lee Pullen, Director of the County of Santa Clara’s Department of Aging and Adult Services.

Afternoon workshops explored new innovations and collaborations between partners to address the challenges facing Bay Area seniors and included sessions on engaging stakeholders in policy change, federal and state strategies to reform healthcare financing and delivery and new approaches to senior housing with services.

“The recent ADHC settlement demonstrated the effectiveness of organizations coming together to advocate for senior issues,” says Robert Edmondson, CEO of On Lok Lifeways. “Our hope with this forum is that by aligning the efforts of Bay Area services providers and through continued, collective persistence, we can effect needed change for this important and growing population.”

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The Bay Area Senior Health Policy Forum was supported by The California HealthCare Foundation, based in Oakland, and The Health Trust, whose grant enabled Santa Clara County seniors and care providers to participate in the forum. Additional sponsors included Institute on Aging, The Heritage, Aging Services of California, and Episcopal Senior Communities. The planning committee for the forum included members from The Health Trust, Bethany Center, Center for Elders' Independence (CEI), Aging Services of California, Community Living Campaign, On Lok Lifeways, Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County and NCB Capital Impact and Village to Village Network. For more information, please see the website at: <http://shpf.elders.org/>

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