"Lighthouse for Older Adults," a CITRIS and University of California Initiative, Brings Technology-Enabled Health and Well-Being to Low-Income California Seniors During COVID Crisis
The program pilot at two affordable housing communities aims to improve older adult health and well-being

CONTACT: Kathleen Stann, Director of Communications, CITRIS

August 11, 2020 (Berkeley, California) –Researchers at CITRIS (Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society) at the University of California are launching today "Lighthouse for Older Adults" (Lighthouse), a public-private initiative to pilot access to telehealth and internet services to low-income seniors. With $3.6 million in funding and partners including affordable housing providers, technology distributors and NGOs, Lighthouse aims to equip older adult residents of affordable housing communities with internet access, telehealth tools and digital literacy skills they need to access information, health care services, and social connections.

"Older adults in affordable housing communities are one of the most underserved populations affected by COVID-19," said CITRIS Health Director and Lighthouse project lead David Lindeman. "They are especially vulnerable due to limited access to information, connection, and health care services. The isolation caused by social distancing further exacerbates this challenge."

Affordable housing, a critical safety net for poor older adults, suffers from limited access to technology and a lack of resources and staff. Residents of these communities often don't have reliable access to devices, sufficient bandwidth for telehealth, or adequate social services, further complicated by the need for multi-lingual and culturally sensitive programs.

Lighthouse will develop and deploy a technology-enabled ecosystem to promote health and well-being that can serve as a model for replication. The program will include internet access, digital hardware and software, telehealth technology, and community-based, peer-to-peer digital literacy training in two California affordable housing buildings. In partnership with CDW Healthcare, Decimal.health, and the Healthy Aging in a Digital World initiative at UC Davis Health, Lighthouse will address the two largest barriers to the successful adoption of telehealth and other technology tools: internet infrastructure and effective digital skills training.

The pilot program will serve more than 300 older adults and launch in two Northern and Southern California communities operated by Front Porch and Eskaton, nonprofit senior living providers that manage a combined portfolio of 38 affordable housing communities. Upon the successful implementation at these two pilot sites, Lighthouse aims to then expand to four additional affordable housing communities. With an emphasis on robust evaluation and refinement, Lighthouse will develop a strategy for replication and scaling for California and to other parts of the country.

"Telehealth and other technology-enabled innovations provide a safe, efficient, and effective way for older adults to access care while social distancing," said Lindeman. "Our ultimate goal is to reach as many underserved seniors as possible with telehealth, technology, internet access, and digital skills. We know that providing pathways to connectivity is essential to support and empower vulnerable older adults during the pandemic and beyond."

The Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society and the Banatao Institute (CITRIS), based at the University of California, was created in 2001 to leverage world-class research to develop technology solutions to society's biggest challenges. CITRIS and UC experts have years of experience in the housing and aging sectors, and will work with the Center for Connected Health Policy, a nationally recognized digital inclusion and telehealth policy research organization. Over the course of this program, they will conduct critical research on digital inclusion policy, telehealth policy and congregate housing. The resulting Telehealth Policy White Paper will lay out a roadmap for continuing and strengthening the momentum for telehealth during and after the pandemic.

Ultimately, the Lighthouse pilot aims to demonstrate that digital connectivity has the power to improve health and overall well-being for the more than 1.6 million older Americans who live in affordable housing. Many older adults, who often suffer from chronic diseases and lack financial resources and reliable information, lead stressful lives that have been worsened by the pandemic.

"Residents of age-qualified affordable housing communities often not only lack broadband connectivity and technology, but also often lack access to high-quality healthcare options," said Dr. Thomas Nesbitt, one of the leading researchers behind the Healthy Aging in a Digital World initiative. "Most older adults have one or more chronic diseases which require more integrated, continuous disease management. Technology-enabled models of care can play a significant role in addressing this need. Our vision for Lighthouse is one that promotes older adult independence, increased social connections with family, caregivers and friends, and improved health and well-being that we hope will be held up as a model for other communities to replicate."

About Lighthouse for Older Adults

Lighthouse for Older Adults is a public-private partnership to support low-income older adults living in affordable housing communities by providing access to internet and telehealth services. Older adults are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19, and those living in affordable housing communities are especially vulnerable due partly to limited access to information, connection, and health care services. Led by the Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society and the Banatao Institute (CITRIS) and University of California researchers, Lighthouse will introduce internet and telehealth technology and provide peer-led digital literacy trainings for low-income older adults. In partnership with affordable housing providers, technology distributors, and NGOs, Lighthouse will pilot its innovative program in two affordable housing communities in Northern and Southern California, with the goal of applying lessons learned and replicating the program statewide and nationally.

About Healthy Aging in a Digital World at UC Davis
Healthy Aging in a Digital World is an interdisciplinary research program dedicated to using innovative technology to improve the lives of older adults and their caregivers. Our team works directly with local communities to understand the day-to-day challenges of growing older and to explore user-friendly ways to apply cutting edge technology to promote healthy aging. The program's mission is to make an immediate and lasting impact on the lives of older adults in Northern California and around the world.

About Eskaton
Eskaton has been serving older adults in Northern California since 1968. As a nonprofit senior living provider, Eskaton's mission is to enhance the lives of older adults through innovative health, housing and social services. With five decades of experience and a national reputation for innovation, Eskaton is Transforming the Aging Experience. For more information, please call 1-866-ESKATON, or visit eskaton.org.

About Front Porch and the Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing
Front Porch is a not-for-profit organization based in Glendale, Calif., serving individuals and families through full-service retirement, active adult, and affordable housing communities. Founded in 1999, Front Porch embraces a leading-edge approach to enhancing well-being with innovative communities and programs like the Front Porch Center For Innovation & Wellbeing, that meet the changing needs of people as they age. Learn more at www.frontporch.net and www.fpciw.org.

About the Center for Connected Health Policy
The Center for Connected Health Policy (CCHP) is the federally designated National Telehealth Policy Resource Center and a recognized authority of national and state telehealth

policy. CCHP was founded in 2008 as a California telehealth policy organization as a program under the Public Health Institute (PHI) and still maintains deep ties and projects related specifically to California issues. CCHPis dedicated to integrating telehealth virtual technologies into the health care system through advancing sound policy based on objective research and informed practices. CCHP has developed some of the most recognized and utilized telehealth resources in the country that are relied upon by federal and state lawmakers, researchers, health systems, providers, national organizations and many others.

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