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To: [Don Schwartz](#); [Mary Gourley](#)
Cc: katie@sebastopolseiorcenter.org
Subject: Senior Center Support Letter
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Greetings:

Of all the formalized oppressions within our imperfect society, (racism, anti-semitism, classism, sexism, etc.) ageism, while being similarly abusive with the worst of them, solely features two distinctively ignoble characteristics:

1) It is, by far, the least acknowledged and therefore suffers from a society-wide ignorance and indifference towards its abuses;

2) Its younger perpetrators, fully indoctrinated with negative prejudicial attitudes, eventually, ironically, age directly into the opposing role of becoming its victims, leaving them with a headful of (subconscious) self-hate that can be impossible to correct.

Ageism's insidious purposes arise from the very core of our society. It becomes a systemic bigotry that defines elders as "quaint," "worthless," and sometimes "disgusting." Quietly, it incrementally pushes them to the fringes of our society and our economy. Creating a Senior Center—while certainly well-intended in so many ways—serves ageism when it functions as a "ghetto-like" facility for their isolation and removal from our mainstream.

From the elder's perspective, the center becomes the only available "safe haven" from the later-in-life ever-escalating ravages of natural aging and contrived, cultural ageism. Here they find a common bond as they give and receive desperately needed support from the isolation, the loneliness, the rejection, the assault on their self-esteem, the death of loved ones, the fears of their own impending demise, and the general hopelessness and depression that usually accompanies such plight. To this honorable segment of our community, it serves fundamental humane purposes that all of us, sooner or later, will undoubtedly need.

Our Senior Center, despite its benefits, suffers from a pervasive stigma within the minds of our mainstream community. Relegating our elders to an "out of sight, out of mind" status assists our hard-wired efforts at a denial of our own impending demise and our unnatural, unwholesome dread of its certainty. Here, elders simply become symbolic pawns in our collective, subconscious, misguidance.

Any proposition that seeks to withdraw funding for the Center will not only bring about the removal of so many needed services and facilitations, it could threaten its very existence. In its extreme, the harshness of such an action could be reminiscent of the all-too-familiar ageist oppression and become a significant stain upon our community character.

Our elders are, in fact, chronological extensions of the rest of us. Soon, we will be "in their shoes" with similar needs, feelings and realities. Their overall circumstance ought to deserve an elevated priority, one that transcends the many pragmatic budget items being considered. Without a Senior Center, there can be no community of true integrity.

Please do not withdraw this desperately needed support.

Robert Beauchamp

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Sebastopol