

PRESS RELEASE

# Project Open Hand CEO Mark Ryle elected to chairperson roles for the Food Is Medicine Coalition in California and the United States

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SAN FRANCISCO, September 11, 2018 – Mark Ryle, LCSW, the Chief Executive Officer of Project Open Hand (San Francisco and Oakland, CA), was recently elected to chairperson roles for the leading food is medicine organizations in California and the United States.

The Medi-Cal Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) Pilot Program is a medical nutrition intervention for Medi-Cal beneficiaries with a diagnosis of congestive heart failure. Aimed at reducing hospital and emergency department 30-day and 90-day readmissions, the Medi-Cal benefit includes complete nutrition of three meals per day, for 12 weeks and four Medical Nutrition Therapy sessions during the intervention, at no cost to the patient.

California is leading the country by launching the first statewide, Medically Tailored Meal program in the United States. The first-of-its-kind medical nutrition pilot program, California Senate Bill (SB) 97 was signed into law in June 2017 with \$6 million dollars funding over a three-year period. The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) oversees the program and will evaluate it at the end of the three years.

Ryle will also serve as vice chair of the Food is Medicine Coalition (FIMC), an association of nonprofits located across the country that provide a evidence-based, medical food and nutrition intervention to critically and chronically ill people in their communities. FIMC priorities include advancing public policy, promoting research and sharing best practices that support access to medically tailored meals and of nutrition education and counseling.

Mark's devotion to serving the critically ill began as a student at the University of Texas student when his best friend was diagnosed as HIV-positive. After 20 years in corporate finance, Mark returned to the University of Chicago to earn his Master of Social Work

with a focus on community organizing and gang intervention followed by two years as a director of Fundación Huesped in Buenos Aires Argentina, building a food program for youth living on the streets. Moving to San Francisco in 2009, he joined Project Open Hand in 2013, where his contributions range from delivering *meals with love* to clients to leading the historic institution's strategic direction as a pioneer in the food and nutrition services (FNS) sector.

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*Project Open Hand is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that connects and educates our community by providing nutritious meals to the sick and vulnerable, improving health outcomes and quality of life.*

*Every day, Project Open Hand prepares 2,500 nutritious meals and provides 200 bags of healthy groceries to help sustain our clients as they battle serious illnesses, isolation, or the health challenges of aging.*

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