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**To:** Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov  
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It's time once again celebrate the holiday season with family and friends. During this period of fellowship and reflection, the staff and leadership of IMPH wish you the very best for the holidays and the new year to come!

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Dear Tony,

It's time once again to celebrate the holiday season with family and friends. During this season of fellowship and reflection, we at IMPH wish you the very best for the holidays and the new year to come.

2016 has been an exciting year for IMPH. True to our mission *to collectively inform policy to improve health and health care*, we strengthened public-private collaboration efforts across the state and certified the benefits of an objective evidence-informed approach to policymaking.

Our key activities and accomplishments from the past year include:

- We released the first annual **Progress Report** presenting a status update on each recommendation from May 2015's Behavioral Health Taskforce report, "**Hope for Tomorrow: The Collective Approach for Transforming South Carolina's Behavioral Health Systems.**" Significant progress has been achieved in a number of areas across South Carolina's system of behavioral health services and supports.
- We also released a status update on recommendations from June 2015's Long-Term Care Taskforce report "**Creating Direction: A Guide to Improving Long-Term Care in South Carolina.**" This **Progress Report** outlines advances towards meeting the prioritized recommendations. The progress made reflects the work of many partners in improving long-term services and supports in South Carolina.
- **Twenty-seven members** of the South Carolina General Assembly were recognized in February as Health Policy Fellows. The elected officials were participants in the fall 2015 offering of the **Fellows Program**, offered by IMPH and supported by **The Duke Endowment** and **Sisters of Charity Foundation of South Carolina**. The program is a non-partisan initiative providing evidence-based information on health and health care issues in South Carolina.

- The [SCale Down Initiative](#) continues to make remarkable progress with active engagement from nearly 100 stakeholders to implement the State Obesity Action Plan. Through this collaborative work, SScale Down is gaining momentum and is making strides in addressing obesity in our state through policy, systems and environmental changes. Obesity rates for adults are beginning to improve according to the [State of Obesity](#) and investment from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of South Carolina is leading towards a system to capture health-related fitness data for youth across the state.
- The IMPH team continues to evolve. We welcomed Dr. Nathaniel Patterson as our director. Early next year we will welcome Ms. Shaena Rouse as a program manager working with the SScale Down Initiative.
- Finally, we share our gratitude for the leadership and vision Dr. Fred Carter has provided as our board chair since 2011. We also thank Dr. Leroy Davis and Sen. Thomas Alexander for their service on the board since 2011. Look for the announcement of our new chair, vice chair and board members next month!

The staff and leadership of IMPH anticipate another impactful year in 2017 with a new class of Health Policy Fellows Program participants, continued engagement with our Fellows alumni, updates on progress made on the recommendations from the Behavioral Health and Long-Term Care Taskforces, continued progress on the collaborative work to advance obesity prevention through the SScale Down Initiative and initiating conversations around the health care workforce in South Carolina.

We look forward to continued work with our valued partners in 2017 as a part of these and other events and initiatives.

Best wishes for the holiday season and the new year to come!

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